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THE  
**UNIT  
FIRST**

KEEPING THE PROMISE  
OF COHESION

CHRISTOPHER C. STRAUB

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At Deurne Airport, Antwerp, Belgium, members of the 16th Signal Battalion embark on a C-130 Hercules aircraft for an autumn exercise.

*US Air Force Photo by Staff Sergeant Robert Marshall.*

# THE UNIT FIRST

KEEPING THE PROMISE  
OF COHESION

*Christopher C. Straub*

1988  
NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
WASHINGTON, DC



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Proofread by William A. Palmer, Jr., Cheltenham, MD, under contract DAHC32-87-A-0014.

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NDU Press publications are sold by the US Government Printing Office. For ordering information, call (202) 783-3238, or write to Superintendent of Documents, US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Straub, Christopher C.,  
The unit first.

Bibliography p.

1. United States. Army—Personnel management. 2. United States. Army—Unit cohesion. 3. Combat. I. Title.

.U323.S77 1988 355.61'0973 87-24726

First printing: March 1988

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## FOREWORD

FOR THE LAST FORTY YEARS, the US Army has assigned its soldiers on an individual basis—not as members of a unit. Supporters of this personnel system point out its clockwork efficiency, its economy, and its mirroring of replacement needs in time of war. Not all observers, however, believe that such a personnel system serves us as well as it should. Lieutenant Colonel Christopher C. Straub argues that the current Army personnel system fails to nurture an element necessary for units to fight well: *cohesion*, that bonding together of soldiers into a coherent fighting unit.

Lieutenant Colonel Straub shows that the Army's personnel system is a reflection of cultural values—particularly American individualism, sense of fair play, equity, and the importance of career advancement. Although US forces performed well in previous wars, experience during the Vietnam conflict suggests that our personnel policies did not foster cohesion in that era. In a future war, we may not be able to count on superior technology, firepower, industrial might, and sheer numbers to compensate for a lack of cohesion. Straub tells us that we will need the added combat power promised by increased cohesion.

#### FOREWORD

This book proposes the adoption of a unit-based personnel system. From the work of its staff researchers—the largest group of organizational psychologists in the free world—the US Army understands the value of units that remain cohesive amidst the stress, confusion, and destruction of the battlefield. The Army's tests of a regimental system—wherein each soldier remains in the same regiment his entire career—and its successful "COHORT" project, for example, are first steps toward improved cohesion. Although the next step—a unit-based personnel system—will not be easy, says the author, it should help realize the promise of battlefield success inherent in the concept of unit cohesion.



BRADLEY C. HOSMER  
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*President, National Defense University*

THE UNIT FIRST

# THE UNIT FIRST

## 1. COHESION: ITS PROMISE

**M**ilitary professionals and their civilian bosses need reminding periodically that one of their principal duties to the nation is to field units that fight well. This book is intended as such a reminder. It is not enough that the defense establishment equips these units well, although choosing and paying for the best equipment are daunting tasks. It is not enough that these units master the most advanced doctrine, although sound doctrine is indispensable and the creation of it occupies many bright minds. It is not enough that these units be swiftly transported to the battle, or that they have abundant supplies. Beyond all these prerequisites of success in war, the unit must fight well.

To fight well presupposes that at least most of the soldiers in a unit have chosen to fight at all, that they individually have the will to fight. Then the individual wills must combine into a fighting team, a team that has practiced and whose members have confidence in each other and in team performance. Because confidence, teamwork, and will are human attributes, in the military division of labor it is the personnel system that should supply or produce or nurture these qualities, just as the logisticians should

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supply ammunition and the tacticians create the doctrine. The personnel system recruits people, groups them into units, promotes and develops them, and moves them to fill Service needs. The way they do these things can foster or inhibit the qualities that soldiers and units must have if units are to fight well, if units are to be cohesive under stress.

Appreciation of the personnel system's pivotal role in combat success is not new. After every war since World War II, analysts inside and outside the Services have noted deficiencies in the will to fight of individuals or in the fighting qualities of units, and have tied these deficiencies to personnel management policies. The passivity and lack of cohesion that characterized most units in the latter stages of the Vietnam war provided vivid examples of the effect of personnel policies (such as the twelve-month tour, individual rotation, inequitable conscription, and six-month command tenures) on unit fighting qualities. In the decade that followed, a spate of historical studies illuminated the relationship between the personnel system and fighting power, and the US Army altered personnel policies so fighting qualities would *develop in units, and cohesion* became the fashion. By 1982 it seemed that the Army at last understood that by recruiting and training soldiers in a group, by keeping soldiers together in units longer, by giving units precedence over individuals, the fighting power of units would grow.

We understood, and we still understand. And yet we act as though we do not. Our hesitant, tentative moves toward stronger units are overlaid on a

personnel system in which basic assumptions have not changed since the beginning of World War II. It is an ironic state of affairs that the US military embraces the importance of unit cohesion, yet fails to make the fundamental changes in personnel policy needed to build that cohesion. Cosmetic changes and improvements on the margins of the personnel system have not altered the fact that today, as in every year since 1940, the personnel system is individual-centered, and that therefore units cannot develop their full potential to be cohesive. Clearly there are forces supporting the personnel system *status quo* that are even more powerful than our all-but-unanimous belief in the combat payoff of cohesion. One of my purposes here is to analyze the forces arrayed against cohesion and to show how firmly they are rooted in our culture and history, but first we should examine the rationale for developing cohesion through unit-centered personnel policies, to demonstrate that this trip is truly necessary.

When the Army Research Institute's Fort Knox researchers documented the positive relationship between tank gunnery results and tank crew stability in 1978,<sup>1</sup> they provided scientific support for a long-held common belief—that a team functions better the longer it stays together, especially if key individual team members, in that case tank commanders and gunners, do not change roles. Leaders have long sought to retain the same soldiers in the same team or unit not only to avoid the necessity of recruiting and training new soldiers but also for the effectiveness of a team that stays together over time. The efforts

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during the Civil War to reenlist veterans, the long enlistment terms and regimental stability of the nineteenth and twentieth century interwar periods, the decisions taken early in both World Wars (and later aborted in both wars) to train, ship, and fight divisions without dilution or transfer, all show an understanding of the benefits of stability. When the goal of stability was kept uppermost, as in the recruiting, training, and deployment of the 10th Mountain Division in World War II, the combat payoff from cohesion was notable.<sup>2</sup>

During World War II, Army historical teams, led by the late S.L.A. Marshall (then a colonel), studied hundreds of small-unit actions. Marshall concluded, among other things, that soldiers who know each other and who know their leaders are much likelier to fight effectively than soldiers who are randomly assembled. Marshall supported his thesis with vivid examples of American units in triumph, stalemate, and reversal. He also drew the connection between cohesion and stability and urged personnel policies that fostered the latter quality.<sup>3</sup> Marshall's commentary, based on indisputable historical evidence, resonated throughout the Service. He remains one of the most powerful postwar voices for cohesion.

Quite apart from scientific or historical justification, belief in the link between unit effectiveness and personnel stability is also validated by the experiences of leaders. Those soldiers who have served in units with low turnover (e.g., contemporary Ranger battalions or "Gyroscope" units of the late 1950s) as well as in normal units with more typical

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high-turnover rates attest to the increased capability, unit pride, and training savings of the low-turnover units. One US Army division commander who served as a lieutenant in a 1950s "Gyroscope" cavalry regiment in Germany that had very low cadre turnover says that the best single way to increase readiness is to adopt a policy, rotation-by-battalion, that increases personnel stability. His experience convinces him that units with a relatively stable, unchanging membership require less training to maintain proficiency.<sup>4</sup> As a corollary, a stable unit could use the training time and money thus saved to increase its capabilities in other ways.

In addition to the belief in stability based on the personal experience of leaders and the evidence in American military history that cohesion derives from stability, US professional military opinion has also been influenced by foreign examples. Chief among these has been the British experience. British military history from Agincourt right up to the retaking of the Falklands is a repeated tale of tightly knit, highly skilled units that rely on cohesion to generate the fighting power needed to overcome numerically superior but less cohesive opponents. British cohesion has been critically necessary when the blunders of British generals placed units in desperate circumstances. One example, often cited in the literature of military sociology, is the performance of the 2nd Scottish Rifles at Neuve Chapelle, France, in February 1915.<sup>5</sup> The regiment lost more than 75 percent of its strength, including all of its officers except for one lieutenant, in the course of a morning. Yet the remainder of the regiment maintained high cohesion

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and discipline for two more days of operations. Once withdrawn from combat for refitting, the regiment ingested a full draft of replacements but still retained its traditional cohesion, to judge by subsequent battles.

British experiences like that of the 2nd Scottish Rifles abound and have attracted the interest of foreign military planners, Americans included, who seek to replicate the intensity of British cohesion in their own forces. Study of British units quickly leads to the unique features of the British personnel system: long-term voluntary service, great authority and responsibility placed on noncommissioned officers, and careers spent in a single regiment. Some current US Army cohesion-building personnel initiatives such as regimental affiliation and battalion rotation are partly adaptations of British practice. Although critics may note that British cohesion is a function of that country's social class structure, and that personnel policies that serve Britain well do not suit a nation of our size, diversity, and worldwide commitments, nonetheless, the British unit-centered system continues to impress and attract us.

The US military has learned about the relationship between stability and cohesion from other foreign countries. The personnel systems of most Commonwealth armies are much like the British, and the cohesion developed by them has been apparent to the generations of Americans who have trained with Canadian units or been guests in an Australian mess. Americans have also noted the success of Israeli forces, some of whose reserve units enjoy exceptional personnel stability.<sup>6</sup> In the past, American

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military thinkers paid close attention to their French counterparts. Although the nineteenth century French experience had few positive lessons about how to maintain unit stability, the thoughts of Colonel Ardant du Picq on small-group cohesion and the soldier's will to fight have influenced Americans since World War I.<sup>7</sup> In setting a combat example that helps build an American consensus for personnel policies that create cohesion, however, the only foreign experience that rivals the British one is that of World War II Germany.

**I**t has long seemed inappropriate to draw positive lessons from an utterly defeated army that devised its policies under an immoral regime. Because of this kind of reasoning, understanding of the effectiveness of the Wehrmacht personnel system has grown only slowly, and only in comparison with the shortcomings of our own victorious but flawed personnel system of the same era. The fact is, however, that we defeated the Germans in spite of, not because of, our personnel system, and even in defeat the German system was remarkably effective. The strong unit loyalties of German soldiers reported by Morris Janowitz and Edward A. Shils in their analysis of German prisoner-of-war interviews contrast with the individualism and weak sense of unit on the American side that is described in Stouffer's *American Soldier*.<sup>8</sup> In 1977 Trevor N. Dupuy measured German and Allied (US and British only) performance in seventy-eight World War II engagements and demonstrated that on average the Germans were 20 to 30 percent

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more effective than their adversaries.<sup>9</sup> Man for man, Wehrmacht forces generated more combat power, even in obviously hopeless situations. In 1982 Martin van Creveld explained at least in part how they did it. He contrasted in detail the personnel policies of the US and German armies of World War II and showed that the German stress on unit stability and continuity produced cohesion and consequently greater combat effectiveness.<sup>10</sup> Van Creveld made clear that personnel management is a powerful tool for creating or dampening the will to fight of individual soldiers and the fighting power of units.

The Wehrmacht personnel system described by van Creveld was not very different from the British system so admired in America. Policies expressly fostered cohesion by creating stability. German soldiers were regionally recruited. Basic training was on a divisional basis; that is, all soldiers destined for, say, the Panzer Lehr Division were trained in Panzer Lehr's training depot by Panzer Lehr cadre. The newly graduated trainees moved to the front in "march battalions" led by Panzer Lehr cadre who were themselves rejoining their old outfit. On arrival in the division rear area, the new soldiers were allocated to replacement companies which exclusively served one of the division's fighting regiments. In the replacement companies, which were located in the division rear area, the new soldiers underwent from two to five weeks of training taught by cadremen from the regiment they would soon join. Replacements joined their regiment only when the regiment was pulled out of combat for rest and retraining. As retraining proceeded, the replacements became

bonded to the regiment's veterans and found their niches in the unit.<sup>11</sup>

The German training and replacement system was not the sole means of building cohesion. The Germans also strengthened the internal ties that bound individuals into units by stressing the quality, stability, and authority of the leaders of those units. Access to officer status was limited; in terms of percent of the entire force, the Wehrmacht had less than one half the officer positions of the US Army of the period.<sup>12</sup> Officer prestige was correspondingly higher and was further enhanced by the presence of a larger proportion of the officer corps in combat units. German officers, like Israeli officers of more recent times, also took more than their share of casualties—an indication that they were leading from the front. Commissions were granted on the basis of demonstrated leadership, not civilian education. Most officers were commissioned from officer candidate school after a period of combat service as an enlisted man. Policy required that their first assignment as an officer be with their old unit. Thus many new lieutenants led platoons under the battalion or regimental commander who had originally recommended them for officer training.

Although often portrayed as an over-centralized, bureaucratic force, the World War II German Army in fact usually delegated tactical decisions to the lowest levels; given available communications and the width of the front to be defended, central control would have failed. Decisionmaking on personnel matters was also delegated to the low level at which leaders

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and soldiers knew each other. In terms of current US Army leadership theories, the World War II Wehrmacht was a "power-down" army. Commanders up through regimental level had far more authority than their US counterparts to reward, transfer, and punish their subordinates. Commanders also determined each soldier's job (the military occupational specialty in US terms) and how he would be trained for it. Consequently German soldiers looked to their unit leaders, and not to an anonymous higher headquarters or some far-off personnel command, for the decisions that most affected their lives and their Service careers. The Germans similarly fostered authority and stability in their noncommissioned leadership. After a periodic rotation to noncombat duty or after recovery from wounds, German NCOs and soldiers were returned to their former units, regardless of the larger personnel situation. Conversely, US practice at this time was to send "casuals," as such returning soldiers were actually termed, to the unit that had a documented shortage, without regard to whether the soldiers had served in that unit before.

The German personnel system described by van Creveld is appealing in its simplicity and its warfighting orientation, and especially attractive in its demonstrated payoff on the battlefield. The system gave priority to the unit and the unit's success in battle over the careers and personal preferences of the unit's members. The German system also based itself as much on an understanding of the "emotional element" of combat as on efficiency.<sup>13</sup> Even though now

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some of the support for cohesion-building policies in the US forces is based on study of the German experience, there are limits to the usefulness of the German system as a model for us. The German social system produced officer and NCO castes that had no parallel in the US Army. Germany was a totalitarian state, able to impose its will easily on soldiers with low expectations about their ability to make personal decisions concerning military service. Germany was also engaged in a total war for survival, a war shared by the civilians who were being bombed at home. The sense of total war against great odds produced tenacity in German units, quite apart from the cohesion that was developed through the way German soldiers were trained and assigned. Furthermore, the German system was completely dedicated to the operational side of war; it might not have been able to cope with the logistical tail of US forces in World War II, much less the logistical and technological complexities of today.

All other disparities aside, there is yet a final caveat about the way the Wehrmacht managed its soldiers: the German system was completely a wartime system whose sole purpose was the immediate task of victory. Although we can learn from the German experience that personnel policy can increase combat power, the American purpose today in seeking a system that strengthens cohesion is much different: to build a system in peacetime, in the volunteer forces of a democracy, that will result in cohesive combat units in war.

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**I**n seeking foreign models for an American system that will build cohesion, we would do better to examine the peacetime practice of other democracies. Even in the British system and in its Commonwealth variations, however, we find the same first principle as in the totalitarian German wartime system: the primacy of the unit over the individual. It is this principle that is the great sticking point in our efforts to build cohesion systematically.

The priority of unit over individual is a ubiquitous feature of the current British system. British soldiers can, and often do, spend most of their careers with the same unit. They need not pursue personal career goals outside the unit, or "ticket punch" in an effort to build a file with which to progress through the NCO ranks; promotions are determined in the unit by the soldier's own leaders, the same leaders in the soldier's MOS and the other vital details of the soldier's professional life. For many British officers and NCOs, the most honored career goal is to become commander or sergeant major of their unit. Within the unit, soldiers are not limited to performing the tasks of a single, narrow specialty. Instead they can be assigned to and trained for any position in the unit. It is quite common in British infantry battalions, for example, for a mortar section leader to be promoted and take up duties in a line infantry platoon, or vice versa. Change of station moves are made by the unit, on the unit's schedule, however, and not by the individual soldier. If the move involves a change of mission or a different equipment type, the unit undergoes the appropriate training as a whole.

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American planners have been attracted to the British model in recent years. Consequently some of the cohesion-building initiatives of the US Army since 1980 have British antecedents. The US regimental system is the most obvious example. Another is the COHORT (cohesion, operational readiness, and training) program in which soldiers stay together in the same unit from the start of individual training right through return from overseas deployment. In increasing numbers (until 1987), entire battalion-level units moved between posts in the United States, Germany, and Korea. There is also a British flavor to the "power down" leadership initiatives of the 1980s, which have increased the authority of battalion and company commanders on such decisions as whether a soldier should be discharged. As the capabilities of the NCO corps have risen in this decade, so have the powers of sergeants to run units and reward and discipline soldiers. The direction of US Army personnel policy thus seems to be running toward the British model, but as I will show in the following chapters, these efforts at strengthening cohesion are isolated and are not in consonance with the forty-year-old fundamental principles of US military personnel policy, which are still unchanged.

Uppermost in those principles is the primacy of the individual over the unit. It is a concept rooted in our national heritage and still legitimized (against steadily accumulating negative evidence) by its apparent success in World War II. The primacy of the individual underpins the individual replacement system which the Army will use in wartime and is also the fundamental assumption on which soldiers plan

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their military careers. Underlying pervasive adherence to this principle is the main impediment to following through on our collective conviction that cohesion increases fighting power.

**T**here are also secondary sources of resistance to policy change. One is the belief that in the stress of a really serious fight, soldiers who have been strangers until that moment can nonetheless fight well. There are historical examples to support this view. *Ad hoc* units formed at random fought well in the confusion of the Wilderness in 1864, and hastily assembled groups of cooks and clerks repelled German armor assaults in the Ardennes in 1944.<sup>14</sup> During the battle for the Golan Heights in 1973, individual Israeli soldiers were hurriedly grouped into tank crews, matched up with reconditioned tanks, and then formed into tank platoons and companies that went immediately into combat and won.<sup>15</sup> Even the cohesion-conscious Wehrmacht was forced to create *ad hoc* units and rush them into a breach, although the German leadership was not pleased with the results.<sup>16</sup>

Because real events suggest that soldiers can form effective units without prior shared experience, perhaps the will to fight can also have other sources than cohesion, such as a belief in the cause, love of country, hatred of the enemy, and pride in belonging to a larger corps (for example, Marine or airborne). Like the success in World War II of Army units that were supported by an individual replacement system, victories won by *ad hoc* units discount the

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value of making the major policy changes that would be required to maintain personnel stability. If wars can be won without the cohesion that is generated by keeping soldiers together for a long time, the reasoning goes, why make an extra effort toward achieving personnel stability?

An audible but minor complaint against greatly stressing cohesion holds that peacetime unit personnel instability is good training for war, because the frequent transfer of soldiers simulates the effect of combat casualties. According to this view, the transfers accustom both leaders and soldiers to what unit life would be like in combat under the US Army's individual replacement system. Leaders would find the requirement to continually ingest and train replacements to be similar to their peacetime training dilemma.

**T**hese contentions challenging the pursuit of cohesion, while interesting, are distinctly minority views. The dominant belief on the subject, expressed in both the military and academic literature, is that there is a link between a unit's fighting power and the amount of time that soldiers spend together in the unit. The need to lengthen that time and thus foster cohesion is widely understood; acting on that understanding, following through on the promising start of the early 1980s is more difficult. To do so, we must withdraw from our policy of individualism to the extent that we put the soldier's unit first. It is critical, and the point of this entire commentary, that we understand and acknowledge the necessity of such a

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change and how it can be done. But it's important first to see how America became so accustomed and devoted to the primacy of the individual in military personnel matters.

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## 2. HOW WE GOT THIS WAY

**T**he scene in the passenger terminal of Travis Air Force Base, California, on any day or night during the Vietnam war, epitomized the American military personnel system in action. Gathered there for military flights to Vietnam, the travelers clearly had a great deal in common. All were in uniform, mostly Army khaki; all were on the threshold of an experience without parallel in their lives. Yet, to judge by behavior, the waiting passengers were alienated from one another. Most kept to themselves. If they talked to each other at all, it was to quietly introduce themselves to other individuals, usually of the same rank and arm of Service, and usually in the roundabout, where-have-you-served manner of soldiers. An observer of this scene would surmise that this was a group of strangers.

The members of the group were waiting to board a plane in obedience to the calling of a roster by a sergeant they did not know. This was normal; they had been called as individuals on rosters read out by strangers many times before, starting with their draft boards or in the cases of the career soldiers in the group, with the anonymous personnel managers in some remote headquarters who had "levied" them for this combat assignment. All of the soldiers had traveled to Travis as individuals, most having taken some leave at home, and they had no expectation that their trip to

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*Vietnam would be in anything other than a randomly arranged group. They also understood that their group was very temporarily assembled, not destined to endure much longer than the flight, and that they would be assigned to their units in Vietnam as individuals. The career soldiers knew this for certain; the new privates assumed it without being told, based on their contact so far with the Army's roster-holders.*

*So the group of strangers that answered the roster and boarded the plane at Travis very likely didn't have much more cohesion than the crowd on tomorrow's Washington-to New York Eastern shuttle flight. Human nature being what it is, however, little knots of affiliation began to take shape, even in the short duration of the flight across the Pacific. Some of the seeds of cohesion were sown in the introductions offered in the Travis departure lounge. Others formed in conversation and pinochle games during the flight. When the plane stopped at Honolulu for fuel, several soldiers headed off in search of a souvenir stand or the airport cocktail lounge and, in the adventure of the search, became a small unit. Back in flight, casual interchange developed into serious conversation. Friendships formed and friends, not strangers, shared the first view of the aerial flares that hung in the Vietnamese night sky, even the first sights and smells of Vietnam perceived in the shuttle bus from the airport to the replacement depot. In less than twenty-four hours, strangers had started to cohere. Then the soldiers would get off the bus, line up, and revert to being individuals and strangers again, through the reading of another roster.*

*This next roster was usually for something as innocuous as billeting arrangements in the replacement depot.*

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*where the soldiers would stay for only a few days before traveling to their eventual unit. Again in a few more days, cohesive groups would surely be forming in the billets, in the mess hall, and on details as soldiers got to know each other. And just as surely the groups would be atomized by the posting of the next rosters, telling which soldiers were destined for which division.*

*The group's repeated shattering was not as randomly determined as the soldiers might think. The Replacement Depot was responding to the requests of the divisions and corps it served. On a particular day, the 1st Infantry Division, say, needed more new replacement artillerymen of a certain grade, while the 9th Infantry Division was short many infantrymen and a few mechanics. So the rosters were composed in response to the imperatives of classification by skill and grade, but the effect of distributing soldiers this way was to divide the group at the Replacement Depot into those who would have a hard war and those who would risk and suffer little. All faced twelve-month coterminous tours, all would receive the same "hostile fire" pay, almost all would be honored with the same decorations for "meritorious service," but the differences in discomfort and danger would be profound. These differences were based in job skills (MOS), and to a lesser extent in grade. Some in a group—the infantry or armor enlisted men and junior officers—would serve a year of serious physical and mental stress and intermittent contact with the enemy. They would live in the jungle, and walk great distances carrying heavy loads, and the rest of it. Others in the group would type and pass paper in air-conditioned buildings, sleep on clean sheets, and run no risks greater than those posed by overindulgence in legal and illegal intoxicants. Still others would have tours falling between these two extremes.*

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*As these very dissimilar tours of duty progressed, resentments would surface. The combat soldiers would eventually become aware of the cushy life led by the clerks, and would both envy and despise them. The rear echelon soldiers would sense this, would also perceive their lack of war-fighting status, and would provide less than their best effort to support the combat troops. The rear area soldiers might at the same time fall prey to self-pity, boredom, and drug abuse. In retrospect it would seem almost inconceivable to the soldiers in our group that they had been friends back at the Replacement Depot, had ever faced the roster holders and the unknowns of this combat tour together. When they meet again for the trip back to the United States, they might not remember that they had ever stood together as friends.*

**T**he personnel system of the Vietnam era had a certain genius for attacking cohesion, for breaking up groups, for creating division, and for making soldiers into isolated individuals. In retrospect it seems a cruel system. But it was not, as we might wish, merely one of many brief aberrations of that aberrant period in our military history. The personnel system of the late 1960s was directly descended from the way we organized soldiers to fight the previous wars of this century. Its twin pillars were dominance of the individual and the urge to classify. In its essential, underlying principles it is the system in effect today and the system we will fight the next war with.

In examining how we got this way, one finds a single common thread stretching through the military

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personnel systems used in this century's wars: primacy of the individual. This trait is seen first of all in the decisions of the leadership in each war to move individuals, rather than units, into and out of the conflict. In carrying on its business, the leadership was not consciously obeying some theory of social organization. The secretaries of war and chiefs of staff who determined or approved these systems were pragmatists who wanted to accomplish a concrete mission. They sought systems that worked, that were effective. Such systems had first to overcome the lack of pre-war preparation that was the American norm and enable the force to expand quickly. Then the systems had to be operationally effective, able to sustain the force created. Depending on the length of the war, the systems also had to be politically effective; they had to function without damaging the support for the war from the American public or American soldiers. Requirements for both kinds of effectiveness have shaped today's personnel system.

In World War I, it was an overwhelming operational problem that put roster readers in front of formations of soldiers at training camps in the United States and France. Because War Department planners chose to activate and man forty-two new divisions before creating a replacement pool, divisions already in combat saw their strength drop toward the point of ineffectiveness. To solve the problem, General Pershing directed that soldiers be transferred from later-arriving divisions to the divisions already engaged. The shortages thus created were filled by more mass transfers of soldiers away from divisions with a still lower priority. In the nineteen months

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duration of the war, some divisions were stripped of most of their soldiers three times.<sup>1</sup> Leaving one's division did not necessarily damage tactical cohesion, provided that the smaller unit, the soldier's immediate environment, remained intact, but divisions with their generals, insignia, slogans, and geographical roots have their own air of power and permanence. Sudden involuntary transfers such as those that occurred in World War I must have been destabilizing experiences at the very least for the soldiers.

Once in battle, of course, some soldiers suffered wounds. Casualties who recovered from their wounds were reassigned to whatever unit had a shortage, not necessarily to their former units.<sup>2</sup> We can surmise that American soldiers in World War I must have become quite adept at removing and replacing their unit insignia.

The need for the personnel system to be politically effective was not paramount in World War I. Although the lottery method used in conscription was a gesture in that direction, an assurance that individuals were equal in the face of random selection, the war was too short and America's war aims too quickly realized for the war to need political shoring up by means of the military personnel system. The nation's war leaders in subsequent conflicts, however, have not had it so simple. The difficulty of their tasks is reflected in the manning systems they chose.

General Marshall and his planners knew before the beginning that World War II would be a long war. They needed to raise a large force while avoiding the haste that caused problems in World War I; they

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needed to assure a replacement flow from the very beginning, and they needed to man the force in a way that would not alienate the American people over the course of a long conflict. Most of all, their personnel system had to be operationally effective. The system they designed embodied industrial thought on the use of manpower as a resource that was typical of the time.

The World War I failure to plan for replacements had embarrassed the Army, quite possibly the reason that personnel doctrine during the inter-war period stressed replacements. In 1923, Army doctrine writers envisioned a continuous flow of individual replacements to the forward area who would proceed automatically to the units with the greatest shortages.<sup>3</sup> Army planners had an industrial vision of people as a resource, people being accounted for and replaced in the same way that the individual parts of a tank or an airplane are. The era of gigantism, in which huge industrial projects promised an escape from the Depression, could understand this way of making war. In the world that imitated and honored Henry Ford's method of organizing for production, it made sense to equate soldiers with the raw materials flowing into the great factories of that era. Like the flow of industrial work, this modern personnel system promised financial and managerial efficiency. The Army took this system to war in 1941. And just as Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* captures the alienation of the worker dehumanized in the 1930s industrial system, so the isolated, disconnected American GI of World War II reflects the individual-centered personnel system of the period.

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Knowledge of the failings of the personnel system in World War I, even replacement play in the 1941 Louisiana maneuvers,<sup>4</sup> did not prevent repetition of the replacement shortfall and its attendant turbulence once World War II was under way. Replacement requirements for the Army in World War II were again miscalculated. Consequently during 1943 and 1944, tens of thousands of infantrymen were transferred out of the units they had known and trained in and were placed in divisions that were either already overseas or were about to go overseas. In the February 1944 removal of replacements from divisions in training, the average affected division lost over 4,100 soldiers.<sup>5</sup> Again, roster calls upset the assumptions of soldiers who thought they had found a home, but once soldiers did reach a combat unit overseas, they stayed in it "for the duration." The unit itself experienced the same situation; apart from the brief rest periods that could be spared in the European theater and the train-ups between island assaults in the Pacific, units were in combat continually until victory was achieved. Individual replacements issued from replacement depots took the places of casualties.<sup>6</sup> After recovering from their wounds, former casualties joined the replacement stream and were assigned to whichever unit had "a valid requisition," that is, had convinced the personnel managers that a shortage existed and should be filled.

The force that won World War II used this personnel system, but apart from the coincidence the system has little to recommend it. It made the war an endurance contest but in many cases denied soldiers

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the cohesion that encourages endurance. As anonymous ciphers in the replacement stream, new soldiers lost their motivation, skills, and physical fitness.<sup>7</sup> They often joined their units while the latter were in active combat, permitting little opportunity for integration into the unit before they were under fire. For example, Okinawa alone received 13,200 replacements during active operations.<sup>8</sup> The relentless continuity of combat operations, especially in the Italian theater, made soldiers feel that they and their units were being ground down.<sup>9</sup> Signs of anomie became widespread. In January 1944, 76 percent of the US Army casualties in Italy were due to "sickness, accident, or exhaustion"—hardly indicators of high morale.<sup>10</sup> Psychiatric casualty rates of 120 to 150 percent per year were not uncommon in infantry units in Italy.<sup>11</sup> In the Army as a whole there were more than 320,000 discharges for psychiatric reasons in World War II.<sup>12</sup>

**A**rmy leaders recognized in 1943 that the personnel system was deficient in providing cohesion and a will to fight, but under the pressure of worldwide operations few changes were made. One change, the introduction of an individual rotation policy, may have eased psychic stress, but it also hurt cohesion. In December 1943, the War Department directed theater commanders to return one percent of their strength per month to the United States, starting in March 1944, against the promise of one-for-one replacements.<sup>13</sup> Theater commanders set rotation criteria; in Italy rotation was by "merit,"

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established by an individual's time in combat, wounds, and decorations.<sup>14</sup> This first, modest rotation program reveals more than the leadership's concern for the political as well as operational effectiveness of the personnel system; it marks new concern for equity for the individual as a guiding, if not dominant, principle in the manning of the force.

The rotation program is also evidence, if any further is needed, of the leadership's lack of consciousness about unit cohesion and the effect of their policies on it. Consider: in the winter of 1943-44, when US forces were heavily committed around the world and were not enjoying unlimited success, why would the Army want to pull away from their units the bravest and most experienced combat soldiers, the *de facto* leaders of their squads and platoons, and replace them with untried strangers? In so doing the Army was unwittingly saying that equity to individuals, the perception of soldiers and of their families at home that the Army was fair, was more important than the performance of its units in battle. The Army has been sending that message in its individual rotation policies ever since.

Individual rotation systems diminish a unit's effectiveness whenever a key individual leaves (and in a good unit everyone is key), but they also damage cohesion before anyone leaves. As soon as the rotation policy is announced, soldiers who are eager to get out of action (in other words, virtually everyone) start defining themselves in terms of the rotation criteria: how many medals or days each soldier is away from rotation. Soldiers become that much more

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preoccupied with their personal status, and less with the unit, and the unit becomes less cohesive. Examples from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam prove the point.

The Army ran World War II demobilization on an individual, not unit, basis. Once hostilities terminated in August 1945, the Army instituted a point system to determine which soldiers would be returned first to the United States. Personnel offices computed an Adjusted Service Rating (ASR) for each soldier, based on the time the soldier had spent overseas, his decorations (no distinction was made between decorations and no credit was given the Combat Infantryman's Badge), and his number of children.<sup>15</sup> During the demobilization conducted under this policy, the integrity of many units shattered as roster readers shuffled soldiers about on the basis of the soldiers' ASRs. Restless over the pace of demobilization and unrestrained by their now-vanished unit environment, soldiers held mass demonstrations in Europe and the Orient in January and February 1946.<sup>16</sup> The troops had been mostly idle; they had been supervised by leaders unknown to them; they had reverted from being members of units to being uniformed individuals, and their indiscipline should have surprised no one. But discipline and unit cohesion were not favored by Army policy; equity to individuals was. According to the War Department press release of 10 May 1945 that announced the demobilization point system, "in this whole program, the Army has put the emphasis on the individual because we felt that was the only fair way in which to carry out demobilization." With an end to fighting,

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political effectiveness ceased being one of the personnel system's purposes and became its sole purpose. Unless soldiers, their parents, and their congressman believed in the fairness of the demobilization program, the political damage would be long lasting.

**I**n the aftermath of World War II, the Army recognized need for improvement in its wartime personnel system. In 1947, the leadership convened a board that excoriated the individual-centered replacement system and recommended unit-centered alternatives.<sup>17</sup> But in Korea, just three years later, the Army repeated one of its World War II mistakes: individual rotation. In a limited war of uncertain duration, the political effectiveness of the personnel system—how it affected the nation's will to wage the conflict—took on added importance. Fairness to the individual soldier was viewed as the key. Initially, the sole rotation criterion was six months of Korean service. Then, beginning in the fall of 1951, a point system was instituted that provided for a faster rotation for combat soldiers than for support troops. A soldier's time in Korea was calculated into Constructive Months of Service (CMS). One month in a combat position equaled four CMS; one month in a support unit earned two CMS. A year later, the category of "intermediate combat" was added, earning CMS at a three-to-one rate.<sup>18</sup> This system provided personnel managers with a record-keeping challenge and had the normal negative effect on cohesion that is produced by individual rotation. Soldiers defined

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themselves more as individuals building up points in the rotation game than as unit members.

Army leaders in Korea saw the lack of cohesion in their combat units and sought to counter it with a unit replacement program. Four-man teams of riflemen were trained together, moved together through the replacement system, and assigned to the same combat unit. The effect of the team packets is unclear. The teams were not always kept together once they arrived in the combat unit.<sup>19</sup> The war had become static, and other key factors in cohesion, such as qualified NCOs in sufficient numbers, were lacking.

The Vietnam war provides the most recent example of an individual rotation policy, but the twelve-month tour did not serve as the only cause of the weakening of US ground forces' cohesion and fighting will that marked the later years of that conflict. Other causes included the disappearance of the NCO corps, poor officer leadership, opposition on the home front, and, most important, failure of the senior military leadership to articulate a winning strategy. These causes were all evident to the troops at the time and deepened the normal cynicism of combat soldiers. The twelve-month tour was thus only one of the handicaps under which US forces in Vietnam labored. But because it defined the key event in soldiers' lives (DEROS: date of return from overseas) in individual terms, because it forced units continually to accommodate themselves to the departure of veterans and the arrival of green troops, because it gave soldiers little reason to care about the outcome of the

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war, because it prevented the accumulation of combat experience, the individual rotation policy in Vietnam was a disaster.<sup>20</sup>

Or was it? Measured in terms of operational effectiveness, the twelve-month tour was a handicap, but considered in terms of political effectiveness, it may have been a necessity, even a success. As in Korea, it would not have been fair to commit a force "for the duration" when the duration, while unknown, was thought to be an awfully long time, and the United States was applying only limited force: far fairer to both conscripts and careerists for all to rotate through Vietnam on a fixed tour of duty, and far more palatable to the parents of soldiers, and, by extension, to the larger public without whose support the war would stop. The Vietnam rotation policy is another example of the military leadership choosing political effectiveness (equity to individuals) over operational effectiveness in designing a personnel system.

The twelve-month tour may have been necessary for another reason. In the view of Charles C. Moskos, the fixed tour maintained the war's legitimacy for some soldiers by removing them from combat before they could sense the long-term futility of their efforts. Knowing they would be out of the war in a year regardless of other circumstances, soldiers could avoid pondering the larger issues. Moskos believes the rotation policy thus fostered "a collective commitment to justify American sacrifice."<sup>21</sup> In other words, the rotation policy aimed at a political goal.

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In the last three wars, we have had personnel systems designed for political effectiveness. Because a perception of fairness to individuals is key in the American context, individuals are the system's building blocks. This is one reason why our system can fairly be termed "individual-centered." But the primacy of the individual is not solely based in concern for equity. The way we man our forces reflects the society and culture of America, the country more dedicated to individualism and more concerned about the fate of the individual than any other.

Americans resist the forced grouping of military life. Their ancestors fled from the lands of mass armies and chose, in acts of great individualism, to determine their own futures in a challenging new land and culture. So when the US military requires that they temporarily lose their identity in a uniformed crowd, Americans do so reluctantly. They may admit the necessity of being in the crowd, but they prefer to be treated as individuals. They can also individually communicate their displeasure, using the means provided by a democracy protective of individual rights. Therefore, it is very much in the American character and tradition for the military to stress the individual when manning the force, and to manage and issue orders to individuals rather than to units. This is the case even when the nation is united in total war; some sociologists have concluded that individual self-interest was the dominant orientation of Americans toward the military during World War II.<sup>27</sup>

Deep seated in the reason for the primacy of the individual in our system, dedication to equality lies at

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the heart of our democratic tradition. The Declaration of Independence, this nation's fundamental document, proclaims egalitarianism as the national faith and as the principle that justifies our separate and unique nationhood. The Declaration ignores artificial gradations between men and asserts there is to be equality before God and in the rights that all men enjoy. The Constitution affirms egalitarianism. All subsequent American history could be explained as an extension and development of egalitarianism and its ever-wider application in American life. Military organization and its requirement for soldiers to surrender some rights and form into masses contradict the egalitarian ideal. Nevertheless, by designing individual-centered personnel systems the military has tried to adhere to the nation's founding and still dominant principle.

American egalitarianism extends to the sharing of burdens. Not only do individual rotation systems with fixed criteria satisfy our hunger for equality; the randomness of individual selection also gratifies us. If we know that the burden can't be shared by all (because the forces can't get that big), our egalitarian instincts want the duty to fall at random, as in a draft lottery. Because it contains so many apparently random elements, decisions about the military job, war theater, and unit that seem to the soldier (when announced by the roster readers) to be the product of no more than throws of the dice, the individual replacement system appeals to our egalitarianism. Random selection is democratic, the American way.<sup>23</sup>

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The military job classification system also appeals to our egalitarianism. Classification addresses the individual and theoretically gives each individual the opportunity to do the job he wants. The practice of classification, including descriptions of military jobs and tests for incoming soldiers to determine which jobs they should be trained for, began in World War I and was refined in World War II. In its essential principles it has been with us ever since. Judging by the stress we place on classification, the importance we give it in assigning and promoting soldiers, and the exacting detail with which we write job descriptions, we reveal some of our belief in the primacy of the individual. But we also reveal another basic value: faith in technology and industrial efficiency. If past wartime practice is indicative, our devotion to these values is greater than our devotion to cohesion and the will to fight in our combat units.

Classification complements our individualism because it responds to the needs and wishes of individuals. Through interviewing and testing, the World War I classification system (and all others since) determined a recruit's prior trade, if any, and placed him in a parallel military job.<sup>24</sup> Belief in the appropriateness of this permeated the Army; if the classifiers missed a soldier with needed civilian skills and put him in a combat arm instead of an equivalent civilian trade, he might still be shifted to a job that used the civilian skill when he got to his unit. The 4th Division in World War I, for example, routinely vetted all its new replacements and pulled out those with needed civilian skills.<sup>25</sup> The process was repeated in World War II. The Army's motive was to take advantage of

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civilian skills already present in the force, saving training time and money in the bargain, and also to show soldiers the Army's concern (which was genuine) for their satisfaction. Both goals seem unexceptionable. In fact, however, this aspect of classification hurt combat units by removing potentially superior soldiers from the fighting jobs. Soldiers with the brains and ambition to acquire a civilian trade, perhaps by working themselves up the apprenticeship ladder of a craft union, were likelier to be outstanding infantrymen (and leaders of other infantrymen) than soldiers without such achievements. So the US Army unwittingly used its classification system to remove potential leaders from the combat arms.

American use of aptitude test scores in World War II had a similarly ambivalent effect. Soldiers with high test results were usually assigned to noncombat specialties. The branch of Service with soldiers holding the highest average scores was the Finance Corps. The branches with the greatest percent of low-scoring soldiers were engineers, field artillery, and infantry.<sup>26</sup> So data produced by the classification system, both test scores and information on soldiers' civilian skills, were used to strengthen the Army's support functions. The parallel consequence, the number of high-quality conscripts not being limitless, was weakness in the combat units. Soldiers who had proven their determination or leadership ability in civilian life were placed in support functions, while the front-line units that most needed these qualities depended on the leftovers and those who slipped through the classification system. Soldiers with the brains and confidence to succeed in the decision-

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filled environment of, for example, the riflemen instead made their contribution to victory in Air Corps motor pools. This system did not serve the Army's fighting power well, although it no doubt gratified the soldiers whose skills and intelligence were rewarded with rear-area jobs.

The classification system had another defect; it added fuel to resentment of the rear by the front. Placement of the privileged in safe and comfortable jobs (and those smart enough or well enough placed in civilian life to land a support job during war *are* privileged, and the combat soldiers know it) flies in the face of a core egalitarian principle, the equal sharing of burdens. But because the permanence of the classification system required soldiers to perform the same kind of job throughout their wartime service, the rotation of soldiers between front and rear that might have bridged this chasm did not occur in any of America's last four wars.

Every war includes resentment of the rear area troops by the front-line combatants, but feelings were especially hard among US forces in World War II.<sup>27</sup> A rotation policy between the echelons might have softened resentments and increased the quality of support as well as the morale of combatants. Some support positions might have been suitable for combat soldiers recovering from wounds, or in need of a break, and commanders would have appreciated the flexibility of being able to draw replacements from support units as well as from the replacement pool. The speciality classification system foreclosed these

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possibilities in World War II, and they stayed closed in Korea and Vietnam.

**T**he classification system appeals to our egalitarianism, but it also sprang naturally from our industrial experience, from the system of industrial organization that reached its height in the inter-war years and continued to dominate US heavy industry until the 1980s. It is part of this Henry Ford vision of life to narrowly define each worker's duties, place equally narrow limits on his responsibilities, and exert the sum of these workers' various tasks (many times repeated) on an assembly line. Workers accepted the limits of their jobs, and accepted also that their narrowly defined jobs with very limited responsibility must necessarily be boring and repetitious. In fact, workers viewed lack of responsibility, the lack of involvement with the success or failure of the greater enterprise, as one of the positive aspects of their work.<sup>28</sup> Labor unions defended the narrowness of their members' specialties; in work-rules disputes they fought for the right of workers in one particular specialty not to do any work in another.


The old industrial system was inflexible, and recognition is now general that it was inefficient, too. In the few places where it survives at all today, it is clearly in its twilight. But it ruled industrial life in America and Europe for most of this century, and in World War I and World War II, it was the modern way to organize. The enormously complex functioning of a division in battle was more understandable as

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a factory, an assembly line at which 16,000 workers did their many distinct tasks, which in sum equaled the division mission. So manpower specialists analyzed military jobs and described the tasks in each job in precise detail, the training centers taught the tasks to soldiers, and soldiers were assigned to positions in units that had been coded for that specific job. Jobs in the same field but at greater levels of responsibility were differentiated by "pay grade" or "skill level," a more scientific way of saying "rank."

The classification of the force into specialized jobs had, and still has, much to recommend it: managerial and financial efficiency for the Army from central control of the training of new soldiers, which could prevent shortages or surpluses of specialties from developing, and satisfaction and motivation for the soldier, who took his place in a skill-based hierarchy similar to what he had left behind in civilian life. In fact, given the decision to operate an individual-centered personnel system, the classification into specialties was a necessity. But it had its drawbacks, even amid the success of World War II. Classification weakened cohesion by putting the demonstrated leaders in support jobs. It weakened the fighting power of units by classifying the smart soldiers into the rear area and less-capable soldiers into harm's way. It created friction between combat troops and those charged with their support. But we rigidly adhered to a precise classification system in every war since 1917, and we still do today.

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lassification fit nicely with the dominant industrial trend of the mid-twentieth century. But it appealed to soldiers (and retains its power to this day) because it caters to the individual. Like random selection and individual rotation and replacement schemes, classification embodies the long-standing American cultural preference for the individual. This bias has driven the military personnel system in our recent wars, but under its impetus unit cohesion withered. Now we shall examine what forms this bias takes in current personnel policy, and whether today's personnel system accommodates or suppresses it.

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## 3. THE INDIVIDUAL COMES FIRST

**T**he primacy of the individual continues to be the operative principle of the Army's personnel system. This is not to say, however, that the Army's leaders have been oblivious to the system's failings. After each war in this century, the Army analyzed how the wartime force was manned. After World War II and again after Vietnam, the analysts particularly criticized the deleterious effects of the wartime replacement systems. In this decade the Army has again analyzed its experience, concluded that stabilizing soldiers—keeping them together in the same unit for longer periods—is a way to build cohesion, and has altered some policies accordingly.<sup>1</sup>

The most sweeping changes grow from the twin pillars of the New Manning System: affiliation of all soldiers with a regiment, and formation of some units that serve for over a three-year period from basic training through overseas service to inactivation. Successful overseas unit moves of company-sized units have led to further experimental moves of battalions. The Army has changed personnel policies to build stability in other ways: by facilitating soldiers'

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return to a "home base" in the United States following overseas duty, by eliminating many reasons for individual soldiers not to move overseas with their units, and by pressing to minimize moves from one installation to another. So the Army has by no means stood pat in defense of the manning system of the past. It accepts the merits of cohesion, it recognizes the link between cohesion and personnel policy, and consequently, it has made some bold changes. But the Army's move forward is doomed to achieve only small improvements on the margin unless the personnel system's fundamental principle, the primacy of the individual over the unit, is reversed. A look at the current system shows that while the unit has made some gains in the past five years, the individual is still dominant.

**T**he most important evidence of today's primacy of the individual is found in the most important element of the personnel system: wartime replacement planning. The New Manning System's initiatives are intended to make units more cohesive in peacetime: they are not a new way to man the force in war. The Army's wartime replacement system is still an individual replacement system whose features would be familiar to soldiers of the last three wars. Training will be centralized (not performed by rear elements of the combat unit to which the soldier is destined), and soldiers will move forward through replacement units to eventually arrive in the combat unit which has previously made known its shortages. Rosters will have the same vital role as in prior wars

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(although these rosters will be composed with the aid of machines), and the whole process will have the air of democratic randomness that is part of our culture. It will also probably be as alienating to soldiers and as damaging to cohesion as the replacement systems were in the last three wars.<sup>2</sup>

Like its predecessors, the replacement system in the next war will assign individuals, not units. Like its predecessors, it will apply individuals to the conflict in much the same way that ammunition or spare parts are applied, and thus will hew to the industrial view of war that informed our national effort in the world wars. Like its predecessors, it will not tolerate surpluses or shortages; it will be a financially and managerially efficient system. And if, like most of its predecessors, it is the replacement system used by a victorious Army, we will be spared of having to count what it cost us in fighting power.

The wartime replacement system's structure is with us now in the peacetime individual replacement system by which the great majority of soldiers are assigned. Central personnel managers apply the Army leadership's policy and resource priority decisions to a computer program which processes information about vacancies, job specialties, priorities, and individual preferences and then emits assignment instructions for individual soldiers.<sup>3</sup> That the process is automated and modern should not obscure the fact that individuals, not units, are managed by it. A handful of unit moves under the auspices of the New Manning System notwithstanding, most permanent-change-of-station moves in the Army are made

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individually. Individual soldiers learn from rosters (or, in the case of career soldiers, from "assignment managers" at the central personnel headquarters) that the Army orders them to move. The soldier may then choose to obey, and go with his family and possessions to the designated new place and unit. Or he may resist the order by arguing (often successfully) that movement should be delayed or that an alternate destination might suit him and the Army better.

When assignment orders have been received, the individual's ability to avoid obeying the orders—to be deleted from orders, or to have compliance deferred for a certain period—can help or hurt cohesion in two ways. First, it will cause similar orders to be issued to someone else who has usually spent less time in his present unit than the deleted individual. Second, if the orders are part of a unit move, a stranger will have to be quickly substituted in place of a known quantity, the deleted soldier. The Army's resistance or acquiescence to deletions and deferrals becomes a measure of the relative strengths of concern for equity for the individual on the one hand and unit cohesion on the other.

Until recently, equity for the individual held the clear edge: "no shows," that is, soldiers who had been ordered to a particular installation but who got themselves deleted or deferred from the orders, were a major problem. In 1984, the commander of Army combat forces in the United States reported that only 60 to 70 percent of the NCOs ordered to join his units that year actually "showed."<sup>4</sup> Partly in response to the instability caused by "no shows," Army policy

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concerning individual movement orders has gotten tougher. In recent years cohesion has been getting the upper hand as the number of reasons for a soldier to be deleted or deferred from orders has shrunk to only the most serious domestic, legal, or medical problems. The entire category of "operational deletion or deferment," a way of saying that a soldier is too important in his present duties to be moved, has been eliminated.<sup>5</sup>

Once a move is complete, tour length—the period of time a soldier spends in his new unit—vitaly affects cohesion. As an important contributing factor, stability has long been a key Army goal in setting tour length policy, but for reasons essentially not related to cohesion. By stability the Army means a soldier staying on the same US installation or in the same overseas theater, not necessarily in the same unit.<sup>6</sup> In this context the purpose of stability is to save money on moves, not to enhance cohesion. The Defense Department lists stability as one of its goals in regulating personnel assignments, but in its directive to the Services on this subject, the Department states its primary goal to be "an *equitable* assignment system to enhance career attractiveness [my emphasis]."<sup>7</sup> Army tour length policy also explicitly gives equity priority over stability,<sup>8</sup> and the Army has created a complex structure to evaluate individual claims of equity.<sup>9</sup> Equity in tour length means a commitment from the Army that all soldiers in the same theater and same category by rank and family status serve the same amount of time, e.g., eighteen months in Europe or twelve months in Korea for first-term unaccompanied soldiers. Other factors, such as what

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key mission or training the soldier's unit is scheduled to perform, or when the unit as a whole is returning to the United States, or what effect the loss of this key soldier at a crucial time will have on the unit, are less important than the principle that all such soldiers must have precisely equal tours of duty. Nowhere in the system is the priority of unit cohesion enunciated. In assigning and moving soldiers, our system still deals in terms of "each," and still stresses fairness to individuals above units.

Another source of instability that threatens the formation of cohesive units is the necessary dedication that American soldiers have to their personal careers. Soldiers rise in knowledge, responsibility, and rank as an individual matter in our Army, just as in our larger society. Although the soldier may benefit from the counsel of his seniors in the unit and may get some credit for his unit's accomplishments, he treads a career path of his own plotting. In fact, the Army enjoins him to plot it.<sup>10</sup> The consequences for personnel stability and unit cohesion are severe.

Career success for most soldiers requires movement between units, to schools, and to nonunit duties (e.g., recruiting sergeant or staff officer) as the soldier gets experience and demonstrates his talents in a variety of environments. The experience acquisition process is called "professional development"; this term is often used by personnel managers to justify a particular assignment. The demonstration of talent in a variety of environments is recorded in a file of reports that forms the basis of future decisions on whether the soldier should be promoted. Because

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senior NCOs and all officers are promoted by persons on central boards who in most cases do not know them personally, these files are vital. Many soldiers believe that many years of reports from one unit, no matter how glowing the reports may be, do not make as strong a file as equally glowing reports from a variety of units performing different missions. Soldiers who stay on one installation for an extended period are tagged as "homesteaders" and suffer professionally. The imperative of the career encourages the ambitious soldier to move, and move often. In this manner, frequent moves weaken unit cohesion. The effect is made more acute when, as is often the case, the ambitious departing soldier is also a leader, either by rank or among his peers.

Soldiers enhance their promotion potential not only through successful duty in a variety of environments but also in a variety of jobs. Their broadened experience is, of course, far more than an aid to promotion; it strengthens the Army's capability to operate in future roles and conflicts that are as yet unforeseen. Commenting on possible exclusive concentration by infantry leaders in one or another of that branch's specialties, then-Major General John W. Foss, while the Chief of Infantry, said,

To be ready when called on to do battle, they (infantrymen) should be trained and experienced in several specialties—mechanized, airborne, air assault, motorized, and the like. We cannot afford to have infantry officers and noncommissioned officers hold views so narrow and so specialized that they cannot serve effectively in different types of infantry units around the world; yet we must recognize that each does have specific training standards for today's job.<sup>11</sup>

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No infantry regiment includes more than one of these specialties. Thus soldiers can gain the broader experience which they and the Service need only by moving to another unit.

Higher staffs also levy their share of officers and NCOs for duty that is seen as professionally enhancing, along with such other extra-unit functions as attending Service schools, advising reserve and ROTC units, and recruiting and training new soldiers. Selection for the latter role, that of drill sergeant, indicates special career potential. But like all the duties that promise professional development, becoming a drill sergeant means individual selection and individual movement away from the unit. Illustrating this point, the path of the drill sergeant merits examination because it typifies the way the individual-centered personnel ethic forms and breaks up groups.

Once arrived at the training center where he will perform his new duties, the new drill sergeant first attends Drill Sergeant School for several months. The school is stressful and the students, more often than not, form some friendships and a sense of class unity. At graduation, the class disperses. The graduates individually report to training companies throughout the installation, in which they serve for two years. About eleven drill sergeants work together closely and intensely in each training company. Personal bonds form among these eleven NCOs, despite the broad differences in their previous units, MOSs, and professional backgrounds. At the end of their stints as drill sergeants, they will individually be ordered to other duties scattered across the Army, and not

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necessarily return to the units they had left two years before. The same scenario plays out for recruiters, for reserve advisors, and for ROTC instructors. Although the intensity in forming cohesive groups may be lower in the latter jobs than for drill sergeants, the principles are the same: the soldiers are assigned and reassigned as individuals; any cohesion that may form is unexpected and therefore unprotected, and no connection exists between the cohesion and *esprit de corps* of the units these soldiers came from and the units in which they perform their special duties. Individually managing these soldiers is easy for the central personnel czars, and the management process gives the soldier a sense of participation in decisions that are vital to him. But the process, mixed blessing that it is, wastes cohesion, a precious commodity. There must be a better way.

**I**n the Army's preoccupation with the individual, even today's centralized promotion system does some damage to cohesion. On its face, central control of promotions seems unexceptionable. It imposes an Army-wide standard of competence for each rank, it maintains the force at the authorized level for each rank, and it ensures fair consideration for each individual. But as in other personnel policies founded on concern over equity for individuals, centralized promotion hurts cohesion in several ways. First and most important, centralized promotion inhibits one of a unit leader's essential powers: the power to promote a subordinate.

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Whether a soldier is promoted by the strength of his file as measured by an Army-wide board, or whether he is a more junior soldier whose locally determined promotion is affected by specialty-related limits imposed by Army headquarters, there is a consequence for cohesion: soldiers look beyond their unit leaders for fundamental decisions about their futures and for judgments about their potential. The leader's authority weakens, and the importance of the unit environment diminishes in the soldier's eyes. To those who would protest that commanders can influence promotion by the efficiency reports they write, there are two responses: the effect of an efficiency report is exceedingly delayed, and the reports are so inflated (especially for NCOs) that a poor report has become too blunt an instrument to be used except *in extremis*.

Centralized promotions emanate from on high without reference to the unit's current needs. They consequently cause unplanned moves, and thus add to instability. Policy forbids moving a soldier between installations as a consequence of promotion, and this gives commanders latitude in retaining promoted soldiers in their old jobs. But it is human nature for the newly promoted soldier to want to serve in a job that equates to his new rank, and commanders want to oblige, and thereby make the point to the other soldiers that rank accompanies responsibility. The career imperative also favors a move; another report in the old job but at a higher rank would not improve the file. So although promotions almost never entail a move to a new station, they do bring about job changes and unit changes. In an artillery battalion at

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Fort Riley, for example, seven staff sergeants appeared on the list (centrally determined in Washington) for promotion to sergeant first class. The rejoicing was general, but five of the sergeants left the battalion to fill openings elsewhere in the higher grade. Each of these sergeants had been the chief of a gun section and a key leader in the unit.<sup>12</sup>

The centralized control of individual assignments has the same effect on cohesion as centralized promotions. The soldier sees clearly that a decision of paramount importance to him and his family is not to be made by the leaders he knows, but by a computer overseen by a stranger in Washington. Not surprisingly, the soldier tries to influence the stranger; he seeks advice from him, and makes his preferences known. In a more cohesive environment the commander might be the source of such advice, and might contribute to the decision. In the present system, often the most help the local commander can give a soldier facing reassignment is to provide him a good telephone with which to call Washington.

Selections of soldiers for school by central boards can similarly harm unit cohesion. Not only does the appearance of the list begin a domino-like series of unplanned moves, the Army gives school attendance priority over stability goals, which means that a soldier on a schools list whose unit is preparing to go overseas will go to school rather than proceed with his unit and attend school later.<sup>13</sup> Given the contribution the schools have made to the quality of the force and given the traditional reluctance of commanders to send their best NCOs to school, the payoff of the

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Army policy has probably counterbalanced the damage to cohesion. Nonetheless, the unseen cost should be acknowledged.

The Army prefers schools as the solution to almost every problem in soldier knowledge. But because the school system is individual-centered, the effect on cohesion goes beyond just the selection of individuals to attend. The great majority of courses in Service schools are like the Drill Sergeant School I described: the students are being educated as individuals. Students may share the stress of the course, students may form cohesive associations (even form into *ad hoc* units) during the course, but their success in the course will be measured individually. Most important, when they graduate, the former students will move as individuals to assignments around the world. In only a few courses, such as the Ranger Department's Light Leaders Course at Fort Benning, Georgia, do the soldiers attend as part of their unit. In this course, which all cadre of light infantry battalions attend as a unit, soldiers learn and practice new skills in the unit context. The students also bring the cohesion which already existed in the unit to bear on the course, and the stressful portions of the course strengthen and deepen that cohesion. Finally, the students stay in the unit in their familiar roles after the course ends. The Army's gain is not merely a number of smarter soldiers but also a more capable and cohesive unit. Regrettably, very little Army schooling falls in this cohesion-enhancing category.

Like the pervasive belief in the primacy of the individual, the industrial theories of organization that

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hark back from Henry Ford's time continue in force in the current personnel system. Other than the war-time replacement system, the current complex and detailed job classification apparatus is one of the most potent holdovers from World War II—and one of the most damaging to cohesion. We in the Army continue to define jobs with exquisite precision, and now there are 396 of them, called military occupational specialties (MOS). Only the most hidebound labor unions make such narrow specifications of workers' duties, or present such a vertical career path, as does the MOS system.

The infantry provides some examples. In the same infantry battalion are soldiers who engage the enemy with rifles, machine guns, and light antitank rockets, soldiers who engage the enemy with heavy antitank rockets, and soldiers who engage the enemy with mortars. These three different groups of soldiers will be managed in different MOS through their first seven pay grades (i.e., most of their careers). They can expect to be promoted at different rates and paid different bonuses at reenlistment, solely on the basis of MOS. These distinctions obtain even though the heavy antitank gunner, as a practical matter, must be able to do all the tasks his rifleman colleagues can do, and even though the antitank rocket is a simple weapon that is more easily mastered than the rifleman's family of weapons. The indirect-fire weapons infantryman, the soldier who serves the mortar, labors under a similar division of the infantry's functions. At higher ranks, when he calculates firing data for the mortar, his work differs considerably from that of his light weapons and antitank peers in

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the infantry battalion. But at the entry level the new mortarman learns his duties on the mortar fairly quickly—often in less than a week's training, in my experience. In both cases, entry level as well as more senior, the mortarman's skills on the mortar are overlaid on his competence in light weapons infantry. As in the case of the antitank gunner, and for everyone else in the infantry battalion, the indirect-fire crewman is a light weapons infantryman with additional skills. Picturing the infantry battalion as a tree, the branches—mortar skills, antitank rocketry, medical, or communications skills—spread out from the single trunk of light weapons infantry, yet the Army has designated each skill to be a distinctive MOS.

The Army creates different MOS not only on the basis of the weapons soldiers use but also because of the vehicles they operate or even ride in. Armor soldiers who operate M-60 tanks are one MOS, those who fight in M-1 tanks another. Entry-level infantrymen who ride to battle in (and perhaps fight from) a Bradley fighting vehicle are a different MOS from the soldier-passengers in the M-113 armored personnel carrier, although the difference in their duties is not profound.<sup>14</sup> In the interests of financial-managerial efficiency, the world of military jobs has indeed been finely divided. The tasks that comprise each job have been defined in detail.

Division and definition have been done and overdone, to the point of restraining soldiers' capacities for growth and also restraining units' potential synergy. Like so many centrally imposed schemes that are devised in detail, job classification in the

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Army can limit and stultify. But classification as currently practiced also hinders cohesion. Obviously, cohesion suffers when one soldier in the unit is promoted over another solely because a worldwide shortage exists in the promoted soldier's MOS. The damage is more acute when that promoted soldier lags behind the other in performance and skill, and the whole unit knows that he lags. Cohesion also suffers from the frequent moves of individual soldiers. But soldiers who ask to remain for longer than a normal tour with their units (a stabilization request) are denied if their MOSs are in demand elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> Worldwide balance of the MOS drives the decisions.

Cohesion is also diminished by the classification system's effect on unit moves. Here the Army's overriding desire for financial-managerial efficiency translates into an obsession about symmetry. In beginning to implement unit moves (i.e., replacing one unit with another), the Army has taken a major step to enhance cohesion. But the Army, concerned that shortages and surpluses be prevented, insists on precise symmetry between the equipment and job skills of the departing and replacing units. Consequently, the ability of units to move from one mission or environment to another is hampered. Under the current system, if asymmetrical moves are permitted, soldiers who thus become excess will have to be assigned away from their old units.<sup>16</sup>

Individual soldiers can escape this and other MOS-driven dilemmas by asking to change to another MOS, but the authority to approve the change in peacetime belongs to the personnel center in

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Washington, and the process is a lengthy one. In sum, the Army's strict adherence to its classification system weakens unit cohesion. As to its efficacy in wartime, we can surmise from its effect on the last three wars that strict adherence to the MOS system will again induce the same front-versus-rear resentment.

We can see that the unit is less important than the individual in today's personnel system, and that unit cohesion as a goal has a lower priority than either equity for the individual, career advancement for the individual, or peacetime efficiency.

**I**n a larger sense, the priorities expressed in our personnel system show the continued dominance of the Army's longstanding (if contradictory) biases toward the individual and toward central control. Today's policies are solidly grounded in American culture as well as in American military history. But before we determine to upset them, we should evaluate what these policies are accomplishing now, not only their impact on cohesion, but also their success at achieving the peacetime efficiency which is their *raison d'être*.

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## 4. THE FRUITS OF CURRENT POLICY

Over the years Service chiefs and secretaries have fulsomely praised the quality of our forces—so much so that their evaluation of today's Army and Marine Corps as the best peacetime US ground forces since World War II has a hyperbolic ring. But our leaders are neither Pollyannas nor disingenuous; the Army and Marines have probably never been better in peacetime. They are fully manned with the smartest soldiers and Marines ever—far smarter than those inducted during the draft. Reenlistment is high. Indiscipline has not been lower since records were kept. Performance in tests and exercises suggests that the ground forces have never been more highly trained, and subjective observation supports this. New equipment is daily increasing Army and Marine capability. So the current claims of chiefs and secretaries err, if at all, on the side of modesty. These forces are the best we've ever fielded.

Success argues for maintaining course, for not making major changes in the mix of policies that works so well. Because so much of our success comes from the satisfaction of high-quality people (the argument would go), personnel policies, especially,

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should be sacrosanct. But in fact, not all personnel policies contribute to our success; we're doing a great job recruiting the right people and giving them challenging, satisfying duty. But, as I will show in this chapter, some key policies of the individual-centered personnel system hold us back from being "all we can be."

**L**ike all successes, the quality of today's forces has many fathers, all legitimate and documentable: a trillion-dollar five-year defense buildup; a pride in ownership of new equipment that is most intense among the soldiers who use it; the Army's introduction of marketing into recruiting, which helped all of the Services; a recession in the early eighties and a continuing decline in manufacturing that drove and still drives talented blue-collar youngsters to the recruiting station; the application of much more money, technology, and time to training; a national mood of patriotism that again honors military service; payoff from investments over the past decade in NCO education; greater attention to family satisfaction; and even enlightened leadership within the Services. Together, these causes have produced superb peacetime forces. But in the midst of all this excellence, our personnel management policies have restrained us from even greater accomplishment. They have also frustrated our efforts to create the cohesion which is as important a multiplier in combat as it is hard to measure in peacetime. A look at the effect these individual-centered policies have on units proves the point. One of the most obvious and damaging effects is personnel "turbulence."

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"Turbulence" seems a strong term for what is, after all, a peacetime personnel matter. But the word accurately describes the atmosphere in units in which soldiers are assigned for short duration. The shorter the duration, the more turbulent the environment of the unit, as it trains and orients newcomers and processes out departees. Of course, the likelihood that cohesive teams will form is decreased in a turbulent unit. One measure of turbulence is the "turnover" rate, which in the Army is the ratio of soldiers leaving their division's home installation on a permanent reassignment, relative to the overall strength of the division.<sup>1</sup> In fiscal 1985, the average Army division stationed in the United States turned over at a rate of 13.4 percent each quarter, or 53.6 percent for the whole year. The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) was the most turbulent US-stationed division by this measure, with 60.4 percent of its soldiers departing on reassignment during the year.<sup>2</sup> Such levels of turnover are not disastrous; our units could not otherwise be as good as they are. But these turnover rates are serious because they hinder the development of cohesion. It is in our power to reduce them because they are largely self-inflicted through our personnel system.

There might be justification for divisions turning over more than half their soldiers in a single year in a period of mobilization, transition to war, or a sudden shrinkage of the force. But 1985, like the years that preceded it, was a "steady state" year of peace. The Army had voluntarily limited its total personnel strength in advance, and all planners knew the limit. Most enlistments were for three or four years. Tour

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lengths, the desired duration of a soldier's assignments, were unchanged from previous years. New equipment was being added in accordance with well-known plans that had long been laid out. No new international emergencies or new treaty obligations required the Army to shift its forces or assume new missions. Put another way, there were no reasons *external to the Army* for the Army to be unstable in 1985, or in the similar "steady state" years of 1983 and 1984, when turnover rates were marginally worse. Despite ideal conditions for stability, and despite the Army's stated adherence to cohesion as a goal, something within our system provides the personnel turbulence evidenced in 50+ percent annual turnover rates. And the reality for units is even worse than the turnover rates indicate.

Official turnover rates understate the problem for several reasons. First, they measure only departures. New arrivals can also be a source of turbulence, especially when not balanced by a corresponding loss, as in the activation of a new unit or a change in organizational structure. Turnover rates thus conceal about half the actual turbulence.

Second, turnover rates only show permanent migration away from the division, which usually entails the soldier (and his family and possessions) moving to another installation. Divisions are large organizations, however; their average strength is about sixteen thousand soldiers. There is plenty of room in a division for soldiers to move laterally without their movement being included in division-level turnover rates. And, as any commander can tell us, they do

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move from one company to another, to another battalion, to battalion or brigade or division headquarters, to help run the gym or augment Army Community Service or perform other needed (and sometimes unauthorized) duties. Within the vastness of the division, they move when they get promoted, they move when they're ready for a greater challenge, they move for purposes of rehabilitation. Of these many moves, only one—the soldier's final, permanent move away from his division—is reported in the turnover rate. So while a divisional turnover rate of 50+ percent per year in a time of external stability is distressing, it underrepresents the turbulence prevalent in units. One way the Army tracks turbulence is through the readiness reporting system and its principal document, the Unit Status Report (USR), the report which measures the availability of the resources from which readiness is created. The readiness reporting system goes much lower than division in measuring turbulence; it requires that monthly outmigration rates be reported for battalions and separate companies. The effect of personnel turbulence on the unit's ability to do its mission is also a factor in the training section of the USR. However, turbulence is not a principal reason for units to rate themselves down on the personnel section of the report; a simple calculation of personnel authorized versus personnel assigned is the primary criterion of personnel readiness. Also, the data on personnel departures to be posted to the USR are undifferentiated as to who is leaving: key leaders or rank and file.<sup>3</sup> The movement of the former category is far more destabilizing than the latter. Additionally, as with divisional turnover

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rates, the intra-unit moves and lateral moves to unauthorized support functions are not included in the USR at all.

Another way to measure personnel instability is to count the number of soldiers in-between permanent assignments at any one time. Most such soldiers are attending Army schools. The education system has burgeoned in the past decade. The NCOs take an average of four professional development courses during their careers, in addition to schooling in new equipment, foreign languages, and preparation for specific roles (e.g., Drill Sergeant School or recruiter training). Officers spend even more time in school. The payoff for the Army from all this education has been enormous, especially in the confidence and know-how of the sergeants. But there is a downside.

All this schooling takes place away from the student-soldier's unit. Most of it happens on another installation, and is often planned to occur after the soldier leaves his old unit and before he arrives at the new one. Thus requirements for more schooling create more frequent moves, shorter durations for leaders in their units, and consequent instability. Schooling also creates vacancies in units in key leadership positions; vacancies are guaranteed if the incumbent attends school while on temporary duty, and they are highly likely if he attends as part of a permanent individual move. The effect is significant, because education requirements are so massive. In 1984, the Commander of Army forces in the United States estimated that 12 percent of all his NCOs were in school at any one time, and that in 1985 the figure

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would rise to 17 percent.<sup>1</sup> In September 1985, 10.2 percent of the Army's total strength, or more than 79,000 soldiers, were in school or were en route from school to a unit. The education system has been vital in rebuilding the Army's competence, but its cost and role in instability and in the frustration of cohesion should be noted.

Another measure of instability and of the incapacity of current personnel policies is what is known in the Army as "force alignment," or the Army's performance in its intense effort to place a soldier in precisely the job for which he was trained, in the right numbers, and in the right pay grade. The utility of matching a soldier's job with his previous training and with his accustomed level of authority is undeniable. In fact, the achievement of a high degree of precision in matching soldiers and jobs is a perennial goal of the personnel system. Monthly reports on how well battalions and larger units are attaining this goal percolate through both the personnel system and the readiness reporting system. The latter includes two MOS qualification-related measures among the ten criteria which a commander should use to evaluate his unit.<sup>2</sup>

The Army's obsession with putting the right soldier in the right place is grounded, first of all, in the desire for maximum readiness. A second reason is the Army's devotion to managerial efficiency. The investment in a soldier's initial training is wasted if he must be retrained in his unit to do another job. The enlistment or reenlistment bonus that enticed a soldier to commit himself for a particular job could be

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similarly wasted. Inspectors general and auditors therefore sniff out MOS mismatch and MOS and grade imbalance with special zeal. They, and commanders, seek the efficiency symbolized by ultimately achieving as close a balance as possible between the skills and pay grades in the "personnel inventory" (as 780,000 people are sometimes known to personnelists), and the skills and pay grades required in the Army's jobs. Achieving that balance is the personnel system's mission.<sup>7</sup> The system's main tools in tackling this mission are centralized management and individual assignments; managers are supposed to look out across the Army, see imbalances, and correct them by moving people. The central power exists, the tools function, soldiers move. But balance and efficiency continue to elude us, and instability persists.

As fiscal 1985 ended, about 74,000 soldiers, more than 11 percent of the Army enlisted force, were assigned to jobs outside their primary specialty. More than 52,000 of these soldiers were "*malutilized*," that is, working in jobs that required skills other than those in which they had originally been trained.<sup>8</sup> As surprising as a "disconnect" like this one may be, these are conservative figures, based on assignments that have been officially reported or noted in inspections. This iceberg has volume below the water line, too. There is part-time work, as when an infantryman who can type helps out in the personnel center in the afternoons, and there are diversions, as when a combat engineer manages a gymnasium for a few months. Part-time work and diversions, which can be expected to increase in a time of budgetary austerity,

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are not usually reported. Therefore the actual imbalance and malutilization in the force is, in my opinion, greater than it appears.

Grade imbalance, a difference between the number of soldiers with particular ranks in a unit and the number of soldiers of those ranks required in the unit, is also both a sign and a cause of instability. Grade imbalances in the aggregate, measured at the major command level (Europe, the United States, and so forth), move up and down in response to "fixes" imposed by the central personnel managers, but a balance is never attained. In October 1984, for example, the Army overall had very close (99.5 percent) to all the NCOs it required, the Army in Europe had slightly more (100.5 percent) than it needed, while the Army in the United States had only 95 percent. By June 1985 Europe's NCO strength had swollen to 105 percent while US-based forces were making do with only 92 percent. The personnel managers responded with policy changes that reduced Europe's NCO strength, and by September 1985 Europe had returned to its authorized level. But the forces in the United States continued short of key enlisted leaders; US strength improved to only 93.7 percent or a shortage of over 6,000 NCOs.<sup>9</sup>

The oscillating NCO strengths exemplify both the strengths and weakness of centralized management. Of course, it is top leadership's job to allocate resources. Allocation decisions translate into personnel policies and adjustments to the automated programs which manage enlisted assignments. Subsequently, feedback shows an unacceptable

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imbalance, and the central managers make further adjustments to attain the strength levels which they desire for each theater. All this is the central personnel system's proper role, its very *raison d'être*. But adjustments from a single, central authority will never attain precise balance in a far-flung force of 780,000 soldiers. Under central management, relative strengths oscillate, but balance is not achieved.

When grade imbalance is overlaid, as it must be, on MOS imbalance, the well-nigh insoluble dilemma of the central personnel manager comes into focus. The grade imbalance problem even at its simplest, i.e., in the aggregate, is a tough one. The time needed to move a soldier and his family and the soldier's own decisions about reenlistment or reclassification (voluntarily changing MOS) will always frustrate the personnel manager's quest for balance. As complicated by the MOS factor, the search for balance is not merely a question of units having too many staff sergeants and too few master sergeants; it is having one more infantry indirect fire staff sergeant than necessary, while lacking two light weapons infantry staff sergeants. To lubricate the effects of imbalance and shortage the Army permits grade substitution, and junior leaders thereby get experience in jobs normally filled by their seniors. But grade substitution is at least partly an admission that exact balance is not possible, even in a centrally managed system.

Like the high-turnover rates, MOS and grade imbalance seem incongruous in a time of fixed overall strength, fixed missions, and dependable enlistment and reenlistment. But the Army is still not as "steady

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state" as it first appears, even in this era of stability. Several factors are still out of control. First and most important is how the Army and its units are organized, the "force structure."

Organizational designs change in reaction to new Soviet capabilities; they change because the Army anticipates a mission that is as yet unstated; they change to accommodate new equipment; they change because some of the Army's most talented people specialize in organizational change. For all these reasons, the Army imposed design changes that affected more than nine hundred units during fiscal 1984.<sup>10</sup> Some of these changes were momentous, e.g., the creation of a new light infantry division and the determination to raise four more, all without adding soldiers to the Army. Some of the changes added new MOS to specialize in new equipment. Some changes deleted support MOS from one type of organization and added them to another. Anticipating turbulence, the Army erected an elaborate automated system to manage organizational changes. The system probably helped, but not enough. As organizations change their structure and thereby change their requirements for numbers, skills, and grades of soldiers, the central personnel managers' balancing task becomes impossible. It's hard enough to balance the force against a constant objective; organizational change, particularly at the rate we've been doing it in the last few years, turns the objective into a moving target. Force structure change is thus a principal culprit in personnel instability.

A second culprit is the priority that some units enjoy in personnel fill. Setting priorities is top

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leadership's job. If a unit is likelier to be in combat on short notice, or if its peacetime mission is of great importance, that unit will be weighted with resources to increase the probability of success. People are one such resource. The Army had administrative mechanisms to provide certain units with a higher proportion of their authorized soldiers, to keep the same soldiers in those units longer, and to provide some units with a better quality of soldier. Some of these mechanisms are simple—a sergeant from the Army's ceremonial Old Guard (3rd Infantry) looks over the new infantry enlistees as they arrive at Fort Benning, checks the test scores of those with the best appearance and bearing, and invites them to change their enlistment contract to the Old Guard (they can refuse). Or at a higher level but with the same simplicity, the Army directs the personnel managers to keep the Ranger Regiment at 115 percent strength, the 82nd Airborne Division at 103 percent, the light divisions at 100 percent.<sup>11</sup> Or the Army directs that all members of the new light divisions and all those supporting them will be stabilized for two years.<sup>12</sup> These directives change as missions and circumstances change.

Units facing brief but important deployments or training exercises are favored with major, and sometime quite rapid, strength increases. For example, the 4th Infantry Division increased its strength by 6 percent, or about a thousand soldiers, in the six months preceding its deployment to Germany for a highly visible and costly Reforger exercise in January 1985. After such special events, the preferred status ends

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abruptly. During the same six months the strength of the 5th Infantry Division, which had participated in the previous Reforger, declined by 4 percent.<sup>13</sup>

Some of the mechanisms by which the Army weights particular units are more complex, especially when soldier quality is at issue. For example, the policy that all officers in combat units of the light infantry divisions must be graduates of Ranger School will affect the training and physical fitness of all the soldiers in those divisions (and, negatively, the soldiers of the heavy divisions who are gradually being deprived of Ranger qualified officers by the same policy). By permitting a few units to easily transfer soldiers who do not meet their units' internal standard or who fail to complete their units' "rite of passage" (e.g., the indoctrination program for all new Ranger Regiment soldiers), the Army makes another subtle quality adjustment. And, by stabilizing all soldiers in the light divisions and the units that support them for two years, the Army states a preference that will translate into greater capability for the units thus favored.

But people are a finite resource in quantity, and even in quality they have only limited elasticity. Therefore the Army's preferential policy for some units means fewer soldiers, less quality, greater instability, and less capability overall for other units. And "other units" are the great majority of the Army's forces. Of the active Army's eighteen divisions only four enjoy the preference of manning at 100 percent of strength or better.<sup>14</sup>

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For every benefit that preferred units receive, the majority of the Army's units undergo a corresponding negative effect. The stability assured by two-year tours in the light infantry divisions means more frequent change of station moves for soldiers in the heavy divisions, and thus a high turnover rate for those divisions. Maintaining forces in Europe at 98 percent strength or maintaining the 82nd Airborne Division at 103 percent means, in an Army that has capped its total strength, that lower priority units have shortages. Such units are predominantly stationed in the United States. The shortages have been so severe in some units in recent years that portions of them have been "zeroed out," meaning that tank companies authorized three tank platoons only field the two they can man. Other units manage the shortages through "battle rostering," a system of expansion from a truncated peacetime configuration to a fully manned organization by designating for key wartime jobs (e.g., tank commander and gunner) soldiers who have different jobs in the compressed peacetime organization.<sup>15</sup>

When units in a bob-tailed peacetime condition are tapped for a training deployment to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, they expand to full strength by taking on platoons from other units on the same installation, so the maximum number of soldiers can benefit from the training.<sup>16</sup> The value of the training is undeniable. But the relationships developed in training between leaders in temporarily formed units differ from the year-round garrison relationship and from the wartime relationship.

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Shortages thus deny an opportunity to build cohesion in what is otherwise superb training.

Shortages also affect training quality by creating unrealistic situations and by requiring soldiers to do more or different tasks in training than they would do in combat. Combat veterans rightly point out that units rarely enter battle with their full authorized strength, and that training short-handed is in fact realistic preparation for war.<sup>17</sup> But to routinely train without a substantial portion of a unit's vehicles (left back because there is no one to man them) is to make life too easy for the maintenance section. To train with less than the full number of forward observer teams is to make life too easy for the fire direction center. To "zero out" platoons simplifies the leaders' tasks, compared to what they would face in combat. But only so much in training can be simulated before the soldiers understandably lose interest. Good training is possible despite shortages of soldiers, but shortage is not a virtue on that account. And when shortages of support troops slow the unit's peacetime administrative routine and infantrymen and artillerymen must be diverted to clerical and housekeeping jobs, even on a part-time basis, the training value for the diverted soldiers is zero.

reating soldier shortages in most units is one way that personnel policy determined and managed by a central authority affects training, cohesion, and, by extension, combat capability. Another way is MOS mismatch and imbalance. Most of those 50,000 "malutilized" soldiers are in units.

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They are doing the essential administrative and support jobs without which the units could not operate in peacetime. They are the rifleman in the battalion personnel center, the cannoneer in the battery supply room. Their diversion from their primary jobs is an operational necessity. But it also hurts in two ways: the diverted soldiers are missing training in the skills they will practice in war, and the squad or section misses the diverted soldiers' contribution to the unique cohesion equation of that small element. And because most of the military occupational specialties in critically short supply in 1985 were technical specialties, the training and cohesion challenge is substantial.<sup>18</sup>

Grade imbalance, on the other hand, can be a training advantage when soldiers get to fill roles that call for more seniority. When a sergeant can command his own tank, and a staff sergeant can lead a tank platoon, the junior leader can grow quickly. When the junior leader's lack of experience and maturity are taken into account, however, the effect of grade imbalance may be a net loss for the unit's capability. The Army fought the latter portion of the Vietnam war with extensive substitution of first-term soldiers for the NCOs who weren't there, and the impact was devastating.

The final and most obvious effect of centralized personnel policy on unit capability is the instability caused by frequent turnover. A constant coming and going of soldiers hinders the development of cohesion, but it also vastly complicates a unit's training plan. A unit that must undergo full-blown, no-notice

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rehearsals of its wartime mission, and must at the same time assure itself of the abilities of a continuous stream of individual replacements, is a unit whose training plan takes up several pages of butcher paper—in other words, a typical Army unit of today. Multi-echelon training, as the technique for countering this challenge is known, will always be a necessity in a world in which continual readiness is required. But the training would be more effective and the capability of our units would be greater if the velocity of turnover could be slowed.

Training is more than just the process by which capability is improved. In the performance of units in advanced training that closely approximates what they would do in war, in the demonstration of a unit's ability to do *the job for which it exists*, training is the peacetime version of combat capability. So an adverse effect on training represents more than just an added but acceptable wrinkle for the unit's training officer. To frustrate and complicate the training task is to obstruct readiness, to obstruct a unit's effort to become more capable. The centralized personnel system is such an obstruction today, and as part of the package it hinders the formation of cohesion.

The Army recognizes the negative effect of personnel instability, shortages, and MOS and grade imbalances on training and readiness, just as it recognizes the value of cohesion. The Army has tried hard, especially since 1980, to face and solve the problem. Unfortunately, its gains have been won on the margin; Service chiefs have been too deeply committed to managerial efficiency and the primacy of

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the individual to make the root-and-branch changes that are needed. But within the familiar framework of its long-standing assumptions, the Army has struggled manfully against personnel turbulence, and its actions are worth briefly recounting here.

**A** heavy push for stability and cohesion was first delivered when Army Chief of Staff General John Wickham determined to freeze the Service's overall strength and make plain that the freeze would remain in force for years to come. In so doing General Wickham imposed discipline on force structure planners, on the staff officers who design new organizations, redesign old ones, and, as we have seen, cause considerable personnel instability at the same time. By making organizational design a zero-sum game the Army calmed a process which instinctively favors change, and it did so in the midst of an equipment modernization drive which was already causing significant turbulence. The precise amount of unit change avoided by the strength freeze is unknowable, but in my view substantial personnel stability was gained.

The reception of new equipment, most of it with vastly greater capabilities than that which it replaces, inevitably causes some organizational design change, and, with it, change in the job skills and grade structure of the unit. Some personnel instability is an unavoidable cost of modernization. The Army strove to minimize instability by setting up an automated system that closely links organizational change with equipment and personnel requirements. A "manual

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override" was added to the system in the form of "functional area analyses," meetings of Army leaders to periodically examine the modernization process unleashed by each new line of equipment and to ensure, among other things, that personnel requirements were planned for and coordinated. By modernizing methodically and attentively, the Army kept to a necessary minimum the destabilization of its soldiers.

Central personnel managers have fought instability by sensing a problem through reports from the field and making a consequent adjustment in policy to solve the problem. For example, as we have seen earlier, NCOs were overstrength in Europe in 1984 and early 1985 and understrength in units in the United States. One reason was that some NCOs were voluntarily extending their European tours at the last possible moment, with only weeks remaining before their scheduled returns to the States. Their replacements had already left their old units in the States and were often already en route to Europe where they became instantly excess to the command's overall needs, and often excess in their new units as well. The personnel managers attacked this problem by requiring that soldiers state their intentions to extend overseas tours at least one year before the soldier's scheduled return home. The policy took some leverage away from soldiers who had used the possibility of extension as a bargaining chip in garnering a better job in the unit in Europe. The policy has probably also cost the government some additional money to move soldiers, because it reduced the number of extensions, and in the same way it slightly increased

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the turnover rate in Europe and thus had an adverse effect on cohesion. But it did have the desired effect of cutting NCO strength in Europe, and so accomplished the managers' intention. The change in the extension policy exemplifies the way the central managers fine-tune specific, narrow policies to attain stability.

**T**he complete opposite of fine tuning is the Army's best known effort of the 1980s to achieve personnel stability and cohesion, the New Manning System. General Edward C. Meyer, Army Chief of Staff from 1979 to 1983, sought to reduce the turbulence that had plagued his Service during the 1970s and to build the cohesion which he believed would make the Army's units more effective in combat.<sup>12</sup> He commissioned a study called ARCOST (Army Cohesion and Stability) that yielded recommendations which contained, among other things, the seeds of a unit-centered personnel system that has taken form as the New Manning System (NMS).

At different points in its history, NMS has been variously considered as a test, as a system that would run parallel to the Army's traditional individual-centered system, as a system suitable only for a minority of elite units, and as the inexorable wave of the future for the entire force. Despite inertia and active opposition, the Army steadily expanded the scope of NMS so that by 1986 the new system had affected every soldier in the Army. So protective has the Army been of this fragile new growth that no Army regulation on

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any subject can be issued that does not contain an estimate of the regulation's likely effect on NMS. Nonetheless, it is by no means certain that NMS will survive as a unit-based system, or that its principles will ever unseat the individual-centered system with which we are so comfortable.

The New Manning System is a pod containing two peas: COHORT (for cohesion, operational readiness, and training) and the regimental system. COHORT entails the recruitment and initial training of a unit's first-term soldiers in a single group, a unit life cycle that all members experience together because of their coterminous tours of duty, greater stability for the unit's members, and unit moves to and from overseas theaters. The regimental system aims at establishing strong regimental loyalty by linking every soldier to a regiment, by moving soldiers to different battalions of their regiment so that they serve with the same people and return to the same locations move after move, and giving regiments the resources to build cohesion (e.g., an honorary Colonel of the Regiment, a ceremonial regimental headquarters at the regiment's home base, a regimental adjutant to guide individual assignment actions through the centralized personnel system).

Either COHORT or the regimental system would have qualified as bold departures from the way the Army has manned the force for generations. Together, as NMS, they were revolutionary, and for that reason their introduction was gradual and accompanied by intense testing. The Army's behavior was contradictory. On the one hand, the Army built

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stout bureaucratic walls to protect the infant NMS, and so it lives on. On the other hand, NMS was applied to the force so hesitantly that during this first decade of its existence, most elements of NMS are still viewed as experiments for which value and practicability remain to be proven.

Strong reasons argued for gradual implementation. Revolutions are destabilizing, and the Army saw no point in creating more instability, even in the name of stability. A quick and complete change in the personnel system would upset the assumptions on which many soldiers had built their careers. Tour lengths would change. A soldier's options at reenlistment, or at the end of an overseas tour, would narrow. Career soldiers could adapt to the NMS environment, but they needed time. A gradual introduction of NMS provided time to market the new concept. A handful of units would run by the rules of NMS, and the rest of the Army would watch and get accustomed to the idea. A gradual introduction also provided time to thoroughly test the effect of NMS in the few units placed under it.

The Army had another, more immediate reason to prefer gradual implementation of NMS. A personnel revolution would have played havoc with manning levels throughout the force. Surpluses and shortages of soldiers would have developed that would have severely affected readiness and would have taken months to unravel. But the decision to introduce NMS in a few units—and thereby have two personnel systems, one unit-based and the other individual-based, running parallel within one

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Army—has also had its costs in stability. For example, because the Army formed its COHORT units at greater than full strength (to allow for attrition, since COHORT units only accept replacements at eighteen-month intervals), and because COHORT soldiers are guaranteed longer tours in their units than are non-NMS soldiers, some of the shortages and instability in non-NMS units are attributable to COHORT. In the zero-sum game that is the Army personnel business, preference for one unit is detriment for another, because the Army's total strength is fixed.

Non-NMS units on the same installation as a COHORT unit feel the effects of the two parallel systems in a more subtle but equally dangerous way: the difference between the two kinds of units attacks the cohesion of the parent formation. The COHORT units are described in the official media as special; they are greatly fussed over by generals and logisticians (who know that the data about the new unit will reach high places), and they can be insufferably confident in their dealings with "ordinary" units. Consequently the non-NMS battalions don't much like the NMS battalion in the brigade—the same battalion they would fight alongside and depend upon in battle.

So the decision to introduce NMS gradually and on a test basis has had its costs in both stability and cohesion. But perhaps the greatest cost for the Army has been that NMS is still not fully implanted or accepted. As of June 1986, only 20,153 out of the Army's 781,000 soldiers were in units formed on the

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COHORT principle. About 62,000 combat arms enlisted soldiers are in established regiments (i.e., regiments with permanent homebase and overseas locations, between which soldiers and their families can expect to move). The Army intends to more than triple the number of established regiments by October 1988 from fifteen regiments to fifty-five. But the process has been thus far so hesitant, and the original concept of the NMS regimental system so watered down to accommodate the individual replacement system, that the strength of the Army's commitment to a unit-based replacement system must be questioned.

The gradual weakening of the regimental system illuminates the continued institutional bias in favor of the individual replacement system and the primacy of the individual. The heart of the regimental system originally was that soldiers would make a career in their own regiment, serving alternately at the regiment's stateside home base and in one of the regiment's overseas battalions. Such a system assumes a balance between the number of positions in the regiment and the number of soldiers who are regimental members: If the regiment is overstrength, some of its members will have to serve in other units, and if the regiment is understrength nonmembers will have to be drafted into it to bring it up to strength. Balance was so much assumed that the regimental system was originally linked to COHORT. Regimental battalions in the United States and overseas were to "rotate," that is, change places with each other; their successful rotation required balanced strength. In 1985, however, the system was radically altered. In

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announcing the expansion of the regimental system in September of that year, Army Chief of Staff General John Wickham announced a policy of open affiliation, in which soldiers could choose to belong to any regiment without regard to that regiment's current strength.<sup>20</sup> He added the necessary corollary that while regimental affiliation would be a primary consideration in assigning soldiers, "No assignment guarantees can be made." Soldiers would be assigned "in order to meet Army requirements and to achieve professional development needs."<sup>21</sup> This decision changed the meaning of the regimental system because it removed limits on regimental membership, killing the regimental system's central idea, that a soldier would make his career in the same regiment, serving with the same leaders and buddies. The decision also clearly decoupled the regimental system from COHORT. Most important, the decision showed that when implementation of an element of NMS called for basic changes in the traditional, centralized, individual-centered personnel system, the old system won. So, while the Army can take pride in originating NMS as a response to instability and lack of cohesion, the Army's follow-through on the specifics puts its commitment to NMS in doubt.

Another effort to strengthen stability and thus build cohesion is taking place in units themselves, without guidance from above. Mindful of the benefits of cohesion, commanders manage their soldiers to keep them longer in the same jobs, and in the same relationship with each other. Tank battalion commanders' offices today often include a wall chart

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showing the battalions' tank crews with the longevity of each soldier in the crew in his job, as well as the longevity of each crew as a unit. Other types of units use similar techniques in a self-directed effort to keep soldiers together longer. The knowledge that the cohesion thus formed will have an eventual combat payoff may not be as powerful a motivator to these commanders as the fact that tank crews that have stayed together longer will fire better in next week's gunnery exercise. But the exercise is, after all, a measure of how well the unit will shoot in battle, so the commander is managing toward the same goal when he promotes a tank driver to sergeant but keeps him in the driver's hatch.

Informal command management of cohesion can add enormously to unit capability, but it cannot slow the instability caused by Army policy or by the centralized personnel system. Like the other pro-cohesion initiatives discussed in this chapter, command management evidences increasing recognition that stability and cohesion are important. Despite this recognition, however, the turbulence in our units shows that we are a long way from having them.

Major developments considered, we still lack progress in developing cohesion, in not acting on what we know from history and from our observation of units, a state of affairs more serious now than ever before in peacetime because our war-fighting doctrine and the sort of war we are likeliest to be involved in both require units with greater cohesion than America has fielded in generations. The

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battlefield envisioned in the doctrine known as Air-Land Battle has depth and fluidity unmatched in previous wars.<sup>22</sup> Units or portions of units are likely to be isolated from each other. Casualties will be heavy. Cohesion, the confidence of soldiers in each other born of long service together, will be essential if we are to win that battle and war. In the past we compensated for our lack of cohesion by our superior numbers and overwhelming firepower. Today, those advantages have passed to our likely adversaries. Although our doctrine fits our situation, it will work for us only if we have cohesive units.

The mid-to-high intensity war described in Air-Land Battle is our main focus, but its actual occurrence seems less immediate than guerrilla or counterinsurgency war, perhaps in Latin America. As Edward Luttwak points out and as our Vietnam experience proved, victory in low-intensity conflict belongs to the side with cohesive units.<sup>23</sup> An environment without front, flanks, or rear, an environment of independent small-unit operations, calls for units with soldiers who have a high degree of mutual confidence and who will stick together under the stress of isolation. Guerrilla war also requires units that serve together in the environment long enough to intimately know its area of operations and to learn the culture of the objective population. Guerrilla war demands, in other words, just the opposite of the kinds of units we fielded in Vietnam while practicing the principles of individual primacy and domestic political effectiveness.

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**M**id-to-high-intensity war is what we exist to deter; low-intensity war is increasingly likely to be our future, and we lack the cohesion to do our best in either. Over the past five or so years we have recognized the need and we have made efforts to stabilize the force and thus foster cohesion, but our efforts have not focused on the heart of the problem. Even the ambitious New Manning System, which held so much early promise, has been introduced too gradually and hesitantly to accomplish much so far. To have the cohesion we need to win future wars, we must go further. We must fundamentally alter the centralized personnel system that moves individuals about for purposes of career progression or individual professional development or organizational change in an attempt to achieve an unattainable balance in skills which are overdefined. Despite this central system the Army has made great gains in the 1980s. If we replace the system and master the assumption that the individual takes precedence over the unit, the Army can achieve even greater gains. To create this new system, we must begin with new assumptions.

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**W**hat do we ask of a military personnel system? First, we require that it contribute to victory in war. In evaluating any component of a fighting force, presumably personnel systems are no exception; war must come first. Even so, we have already seen that in America's last three wars the personnel system hindered our progress. American firepower, technical superiority, and industrial capacity more than compensated for personnel weaknesses, but our former sources of dominance are now matched, in some cases even exceeded, by potential adversaries. Therefore in the wars for which we now plan, a personnel system that is even merely neutral to the outcome will be insufficient. We look today for personnel strengths to make up for material insufficiency. We should ask our personnel system to do for us what personnel systems have done for other numerically inferior but high-quality armies (in this century, the British and the World War II Germans) to make a decisive contribution to the force's fighting power.

As we know from historical examples, the system by which soldiers are recruited, trained,

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rewarded, disciplined, assigned, and replaced can multiply an army's fighting power, making us justified in asking the personnel system to increase the quality of combat units beyond the sum of their weapons, organization, and tactics, as fine as these may be otherwise. We look to the personnel system for soldiers who are skilled, innovative, and brave. We should expect it to produce organizations that work well together. We can even expect it to improve the logistic support that combat units receive. All these qualities are obtainable from a sound personnel system.

To successfully meet future conflicts requires skilled soldiers who will be the product of a system that continually challenges their capacity for growth, that encourages them to master all aspects of their tactical environment rather than restricting them to the mindless repetition of a narrow group of tasks. These innovative soldiers will have had the training experiences to understand their unit's mission and how to contribute to it. Because of stability in the unit, soldiers who will know their leaders well will know what the leader has in mind, or how he would want something done, even when the leader is unable to direct. Such units will have the natural synergy of a veteran team. Brave soldiers will be so to protect and maintain the esteem of the old friends with whom they serve and to defend a unit environment that is their home. Combat units will get the best logistics support possible because their support troops will know from personal experience what it means to be on the front line, and many will expect, in the normal course of rotation, to serve there again.

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It sounds like a utopian army, but we can have it ready for any next war.

**W**e can hardly afford not to. In terms of money, this force would cost no more than what we spend today. In terms of ideas, we would have to divest ourselves of obsolete but dearly held perceptions about individual primacy and equity, peacetime efficiency, and industrial organization. Having divested, we could then install a personnel system that could greatly multiply the already potent effects of American weapons in the hands of an organized, dedicated group of American fighting men.

Because the first priority of any military system is its wartime function, we should begin building a new personnel system by showing its elements at work in combat. Then we can move back up into peacetime personnel policy to build a system that will prepare the ground for wartime success.

In seeking to ensure cohesive units in combat, the operators who select or tailor the forces for a particular mission ("task organize" is the Army term) have a decisive role. The right personnel system can, over years, produce cohesive units, but the wrong task organization can diminish or even wreck that cohesion in a matter of hours. In the combined arms environment that is normal in mid- and high-intensity operations, companies and platoons routinely intermingle ("cross attach"). This mixing should be, and usually is, routine so that the tank company

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commander and attached infantry platoon leader can know each other well, and so that the soldiers in the two units can develop mutual confidence. Primary cohesive bonds are undoubtedly stronger and more important within the infantry squad and tank crews than between the larger units of the two arms. But operators, as they task organize, should consider the value of habitual inter-arm relationships, and commanders should try to make these relationships as habitual as possible.


The Saudi Arabian National Guard is an example of an organization that developed tight cohesion through a unit-centered personnel policy, and then negated the policy's effect through task organization. In 1979 when units of the Saudi Guard were called to Mecca to clear dissidents from the Great Mosque, cohesion was left behind at the home station. The Guard's modernized battalions had been formed by combining sub-units of distinct combat arms and trained as single cohorts, much like US cavalry squadrons. The soldiers had become habituated to each other and to their leaders. But at the moment of crisis, the Guard's top leaders decided that only heavy weapons were needed in Mecca; they picked through the four combined arms battalions to create an *ad hoc* anti-armor unit. Remaining fragments of the battalions remained at home station. Although little is known of the *ad hoc* unit's performance in Mecca (except its destructiveness and ultimate success), we can safely say that cohesion was sacrificed. Its absence had a price in effectiveness and public perception.

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When selected US special operations forces were lashed together for the 1980 Iran hostage rescue mission, they too demonstrated a lack of cohesion that is typical of *ad hoc* units. The problems at Desert One were aggravated by foul weather and a fragmented, divided chain of command, but lack of cohesion also played a part. The ground commander had not previously worked closely with the supporting helicopter pilots and lacked confidence in their judgment and courage.<sup>1</sup> Special operations planners learned from Desert One; special operations aviators now routinely train with the ground forces with whom they would serve. Next time, the ground commander will have every reason to have confidence in his pilots.

Those who match forces with missions, the operators and planners, appear both creative and dedicated to efficiency when they tailor and tinker to produce *ad hoc* forces that are exactly right for the specific mission. But in terms of fighting power, the real efficiency lies in the less innovative selection of an already existing unit in its entirety. Even when the capabilities of some portions of the unit are not applicable to the mission, the unit's cohesion is a strong buttress against failure. Similarly, units of vastly different capabilities (e.g., helicopter and light infantry) that will fight together must habitually train together. Otherwise cohesion will not form. As in the Iran rescue mission, in this regard, fostering cohesion and turning cohesion to our advantage in war are the province of planners and operators.

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nce we have firmly protected cohesion from being task-organized out of existence, we will look to personnel managers for the system that sustains cohesion during war. We know the core principle for such a system must be the primacy of the unit. Wherever practical, units, not individuals, should be moved and managed. Where rotation is desirable (from front to rear, from combat to a training and refitting respite, from war theater to the US, from an area of tough fighting to a more tranquil part of the front), units should be rotated. The fact that not all soldiers in the rotating unit have undergone precisely the same amount of combat or rest should not be a factor in the decision to rotate units. In cold reality, equity for individuals is not attainable anyway, even in a system that centrally manages individuals. The Vietnam one-year tour, for example, was by no means a fair system. The sacrifice and risk entailed in a year in an air-conditioned headquarters is quite different from a year in the infantry. Even within the same specialty, a year in one infantry unit may be much tougher than in another, and point systems like those used in World War II and Korea will not capture the distinction. So our rotation policy has been seeking an equity will-o'-the-wisp and it should stop. The important point in combat rotation is to keep the unit together.

Although units will rotate, casualties and promotions will cause vacancies that cannot always, or even often, be filled with units. Thus the replacement system must produce individual replacements in the right number and on short notice. A unit-based system similar to that used by the Germans in World

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War II would do the job. There are five key elements of such a US wartime replacement system:

1. Replacements would be trained and moved forward to the combat theater on a unit basis. Training units in the United States would be dedicated to exclusively training replacements for one division or separate brigade. Trainers (drill sergeants) would be veterans of the division, perhaps in the later stages of convalescence from wounds, and some of the trainers would accompany the new soldiers as they moved as a unit to the war zone.

2. Replacement battalions under division control would continue the new soldiers' training process and would allocate the new men to combat battalions when the tactical situation permitted. Companies in the replacement battalion would be permanently paired with a brigade in the combat division. Replacements would be allocated in groups of at least two or more soldiers, and any overstrengths thus created at squad level would be ignored. When equipment as well as soldiers required replacement, new soldiers could be grouped into crews and issued their weapons system or vehicle in the replacement battalion.<sup>2</sup> Combat battalions would accept replacements during rotations out of the line except in extreme emergency, and the combat units would integrate the new men during a refresher training period for the whole unit. When massive casualties necessitated reconstitution, the replacement battalion would fill complete squads and platoons, including cadre.

3. Unit relationships would be maintained for convalescents without regard for overstrengths or

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personnel balance. Soldiers recovered from wounds would be returned to their old units, even though replacements had since filled old positions and even though another unit might be short some soldiers. This policy would sanction a degree of inefficiency, but cohesion and unit loyalty would more than compensate (as we have seen in previous wars, the unsanctioned inefficiencies of a centrally managed requirements-based system are at least as bad). Some soldiers in advanced convalescence could work in clerical and support jobs in the rear area until they regained the full fitness necessary for combat. Others would train new unit members-to-be in the replacement battalion or back in the United States.

4. Combat units needing a rest would rotate to support missions. For example, tank battalions would turn in their remaining tanks to the division or to an area equipment group and would act as rear area security or military police for several months. As with the individual convalescents in support jobs, the rotation of combat units through the rear area would build unity between the front and the rear and would diminish the front-rear antagonism that was so damaging in World War II and Vietnam. When the time comes for the tank battalion to return to the front, a weapons-system replacement flow could be arranged with the division's logisticians. The tankers would form into their old crew configurations and be matched with new or repaired tanks.

5. The wartime primacy of the unit would protect units from the massive personnel transfers that gutted mature organizations in both World Wars.

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While compelling operational reasons may argue for cloning infantry divisions by using several thousand soldiers from one division as the core of a second, as the Army did in both World Wars, the immediate effect is a gutted division. Primary, small-unit cohesion may not be damaged, but the soldiers' *esprit de corps* is certainly affected, together with their confidence in the strength and permanence of the Army's institutions. These who were present in Vietnam in 1967 when the 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions swapped brigades will validate this point. The consequences are still more intense when battalions or companies are pillaged so that new ones can be formed. Commanders must internalize the belief that unit bonds are sacred, to be broken only *in extremis*. More than mere policy will be required to change the mindset of a generation of leaders, but policy would be a beginning.

This unit-based replacement system should be enshrined in both concept and details as official Army doctrine in a "How to Fight" field manual. Doctrine on wartime replacement is brief, superficial, and unchanged in its main principles since World War II. A new, detailed manual on the subject could be the basis of Service school instruction and an instrument of the mental conversion process that the Service must undergo concerning wartime personnel policy.<sup>3</sup>

**T**he way we man the wartime force and keep it up to strength is vital to combat success. But unless wartime exigencies are preceded by a build-up of cohesion during peacetime, a sound wartime

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replacement system will pay only partial dividends. To achieve our ends, the Army's peacetime personnel system must be fundamentally changed.

As the first and most important change, the Army should implement the New Manning System (NMS) completely. Five plus years of testing and hesitation have saddled the force with two parallel systems, one individual and the other unit-based. Neither system works as well as it could, and together they cause turbulence in the force and uncertainty in the minds of soldiers. Implementing NMS would specifically include limiting membership in regiments to the number needed to man the regiment and perform extra-regimental duties, guaranteeing soldiers a certain period of service with their regiments, retaining and not dissolving COHORT units at the third anniversary of their formation, planning to expand the force (when operationally required) by using the COHORT method of recruitment and training, adopting unit moves as the norm, and moving individuals only in exceptional cases.

A complete embrace of NMS departs radically from current practice. But in this case boldness does not entail great risks, especially if we undertake the supporting initiatives that further increase the cohesion and stability that we seek from NMS. Even without NMS, certain supporting initiatives are essential to having more cohesive units. The first step to take involves movement; how we do it, and how often.

Under NMS, unit moves will predominate. With or without NMS, however, we should choose unit temporary duty (TDY) and unit deployments (a la the

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Navy and Marines) as the standard Army response to a mission that requires movement of forces. The bonds of cohesion that are so evident among the units deployed on peacekeeping TDY in the Sinai foretell the potential benefits. When units get a mission that involves movement, the entire organic unit should move, not just a tailored slice. As for unit moves involving dependents and individual moves of all kinds, they should occur less frequently. An advantage of a cohesion-oriented, unit-based personnel system is that it fits current budgetary reality. The funds to pay for moves will be increasingly scarce in the years ahead. It is thus a happy coincidence that less moving will take place and cohesion will be served, quite apart from any action we take. This is a propitious time to transition toward unit moves, unit TDY when necessary, and less moves of all types.

Another supporting initiative, vital to stability with or without NMS, is to strictly limit changes in organizational design. We have already seen how continual organizational change creates turbulence and handicaps the personnel managers' efforts to balance the force. An outright freeze in force development is tempting, but impractical; new weapons require new kinds of units, and we are in the midst of a necessary equipment modernization. But apart from equipment-driven initiatives, the Army needs to look on changes in unit design with a jaundiced eye, and should reward the staff officer who champions the *status quo*. Stability thus engendered will make it easier for units to move as units and exchange their mission with other units, and also reduce the growth in variations of unit designs.

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While limiting variety on the one hand, we are ripe to contain our obsession with standardization on the other. Approximately equal capabilities between units are more important than identical organizational designs. A mechanized infantry battalion, in some situations, could perform the route security or reconnaissance missions normally required of a cavalry squadron. Or the same battalion could turn in its fighting vehicles, switch to armored cars or trucks, and take on rear area security tasks typical of military police. Potential capability is the key point, and in our search for organizational symmetry we miss it; we think that a unit's principal task is the only job it can do.

Currently we are even more zealous in seeking job skill symmetry. The military occupational specialty (MOS) structure is the result, and even it must change radically if we are serious about facilitating cohesion. Today the MOS structure is too narrow to permit a soldier to have a full career in one unit. The narrowness of each set of skills makes it unnecessarily difficult for soldiers to become experts on all aspects of their unit's operations by the time they attain first sergeant/master sergeant ranks (E-8). Furthermore, the MOS system does not challenge soldiers sufficiently; our soldiers are capable of far more than just the repetition of the same narrow series of tasks. The MOS system also frustrates cohesion when personnel managers move soldiers or deny extensions in order to attain balance across a large number of narrow MOSs, and when soldiers in the same unit are promoted at different rates solely on the basis of MOS.

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So, clearly, we must both broaden and deemphasize the MOS system. The narrow MOS should be merged into a skill family that encompasses all the tasks in a particular arm. Instead of today's differentiation of mortarman from rifleman, for example, we should create a single infantry skill family. All infantrymen should be initially trained as basic riflemen. After honing rifleman skills in one of their unit's rifle squads, they would acquire mortar, antitank, and other skills as the unit required. Training would be mainly in unit schools, and the unit would maintain a record of each soldier's growing list of skills. Over the course of a career the soldier would likely practice many of the skills which together comprise his unit's combat function. Like British soldiers today, this soldier could transfer from leading an antitank missile section to leading the mortar platoon, or to the role of company communications chief. A challenging and successful career could be made in one battalion-sized unit. And, long before the career was over, the soldier would be a master infantryman.

Broadening and deemphasizing the MOS system challenges a pervasive traditional design and therefore will meet strong resistance. Many are comfortable with the industrial organization of the MOS system, the "union rules" way of life that is embodied in the precisely defined skills that today's soldiers must master, and the narrow career path the soldiers must tread. But the resistance has to be overcome; the current MOS system must change.

Because cohesion is so important, it should be measured, and the measurement should mean

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something to those charged with the combat readiness of units. Today's Unit Status Report (USR), which measures the movement of personnel at battalion level and above but does not infer anything about readiness from the result, is insufficient. The USR asks nothing about turbulence at the most important levels of cohesion (company, platoon, and squad). Neither does it ask the vital question of *who* has moved. As Lewis Sorley has pointed out, cohesion will be more affected by the replacement of leaders than followers, and a meaningful USR would make this distinction.<sup>4</sup> A more useful USR would also report the percent of squads, platoons, and companies in the battalion that accepted more than a certain level of replacements (say 15 percent) during the month. Gathering the data for this report may seem onerous, but the purposes of cohesion would be served; commanders managing their subelements for cohesion would have to pay daily attention to the turbulence of squads. Charts like those used today in many armor battalions to track tank crew stability would appear in commanders' offices across the force, and the Army's units would be the more cohesive for it.

Meaningful mandatory reports on turbulence would pay another benefit. With policies to limit turbulence, and with accountability measures in place, commanders would be encouraged not to pillage one unit to fill another that is slated for a high-visibility training mission. The always strong temptation to create *ad hoc* units for key events would thus receive an even more powerful antidote. Unit integrity

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would become an operating principle instead of a platitude.

Unit capabilities are also measured in training exercises, either partly by instruments as at the National Training Center or by subjective professional judgment as in a readiness test and evaluation (the ARTEP). It is not necessary (and not possible, either) to explicitly measure cohesion in training tests; cohesion will nonetheless be a factor in the unit's success, but, as Colonel Dandridge M. (Mike) Malone has suggested, individual and unit tests should include an evaluation of teamwork.<sup>5</sup> If the teamwork evaluation is part of every major task, units will practice it, think seriously about it, and keep soldiers together longer. Teamwork evaluation should also be highlighted at the National Training Center and on deployment exercises. Evaluators should criticize failures in teamwork as frankly as they do the objectively measured mission elements like gunnery. Malone also suggests tying a commander's efficiency report to the ARTEP performance of the unit above him, an idea that follows naturally from a candid evaluation of teamwork.<sup>6</sup>

The training process presents other opportunities to foster cohesion in peacetime, opportunities that we squander today. We know that most Service schooling is for individuals, not units. Cohesion builds between classmates, but the class atomizes at graduation, and the cohesion is wasted. If complete units were to attend the same schools as a group, the cohesion fostered in the courses would be more permanent; it would live on in the units. The

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goals of Service schooling would change from imparting new skills to individuals to imparting new capabilities to units. The Light Leaders Course at Fort Benning's Ranger School exemplifies the direction we should take, as does the Army's Jungle School in Panama or the French Army's Commando Training Centers in Germany, which many US platoons have attended.<sup>7</sup> The Indian Army precedes new missions for units with a school that teaches the entire unit the skills needed to accomplish the new mission. Battalions ordered to counterinsurgency duties in the northeast tribal areas first attend Counterinsurgency School. Battalions scheduled to guard the frontier in the Himalayas of Kashmir first attend Mountain School.<sup>8</sup> Of course training this way broadens the skill inventory of individuals. But more important, it gives new capability to units—and cohesion grows in the process.

**H**arsh budgetary reality must intrude on visions of the ideal cohesive Army. For example, sending units instead of individuals to school wouldn't be more expensive, but it wouldn't be much cheaper, either. In today's austere fiscal environment, if we are to have the money to complete the ongoing equipment modernization and pay for training ammunition, we must seek savings elsewhere. The cost of moving soldiers yields a great place to look. The school system drives a large part of those costs. So, while we must retain some courses at central locations to which either individuals or units must move, we should also look for training systems

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that do not involve movement away from the unit's home station.

To keep our units off the road, we could teach the needed course at the units' home stations, using course materials prepared by the centralized school system. Individual soldiers have for many years voluntarily used correspondence courses from their branch schools to increase their skills. The schools' abilities to export course materials and to stay abreast of student progress have been enhanced by computers; computer-based instruction at home stations is now one of the principal tools of the Army's professional development program. These methods, of course, do nothing for cohesion, but they point the direction in which we should go: unit schools actively supported by the central school system. Just as courses in individual skill development are now exported from the various Service schools, so courses in unit capability development could also be exported. When faced with a new mission or weapons system, or a need to refresh a unit's atrophying capability, a commander could order the appropriate course from his branch school. The school and the unit operations officer would together tailor the course to the unit's environment. As the course progressed, the school could teach and monitor the unit, either by computer or by on-site instructors, or both.

Exported unit schools could also serve portions of the larger unit. The commander might order specific short courses for the mortar fire direction center only, or for just the battalion staff. The point is that the soldiers who habitually do the job together are

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getting the training together, in the context of their larger unit environment. The savings that result from less moves to distant schools are an additional benefit.

Further savings present themselves in the schools and movement relationship. Unit schools need not be limited to sub-units that have already been formed. Using materials supplied by the central branch school, battalions could train individual soldiers in some of the more advanced skills of the soldiers' particular specialties. This in-unit training would take the place of much of the advanced individual training that new soldiers now undergo at training centers prior to their first assignments. Here, the savings in both time and money would be considerable: between 40 and 50 percent of the initial entry training period could be deleted in the major combat specialties. Instead, the Army would defer the training, leaving commanders to conduct it within their units whenever they thought it necessary. Transfer of this responsibility to units would not work, however, unless the Army decentralized skill awarding and record-keeping and greatly reduced the current plethora of MOS. A familiar example—the mix of skills within the infantry battalion, and the relationships between them—shows how unit schools for advanced skills interact with MOS reform, and why one cannot happen without the other.

The infantry battalion needs riflemen, mortar-men, and antitank gunners, and it needs soldiers to lead the sub-units that perform these functions. But if new soldiers are going to spend their entire enlistments in the same units, they don't need to arrive in

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the units already in full possession of all their skills. In fact, under today's centralized system the basic training centers teach new soldiers only a fraction of the skills they will need; the Army presumes that units will complete the training. Under a decentralized cohesion-building system, which simply extends this presumption, new infantrymen should come to their units after about eight weeks of basic training. During basic training, recruits learn, besides basic soldier knowledge, physical conditioning, and habits of pride and dedication, about half the skills required of the rifleman. Upon graduation, they receive not the current 11B light weapons rifleman MOS but simply certification as entry-level members of, say, the 41st Infantry Regiment.

Arriving at a battalion of the 41st, the new soldiers are initially assigned to a rifle platoon. From their NCOs and slightly more senior peers, they learn the balance of the rifleman's skills. Through experience and through tests that relate to promotion, the new soldiers grow into mastery of the rifleman's skills. They cease to be new soldiers. Meanwhile the commander prepares for vacancies in the mortar and antitank platoons. Periodically, he directs the leaders of those platoons to conduct unit schools to teach basic mortar and antitank skills to promising riflemen. The unit schools would be supported by the Infantry School but would be less elaborate and less time-consuming than the resident instruction currently given in these specialties. Soldiers who pass the unit school would eventually be transferred to the mortar or antitank platoon for a tour of duty using their new skills and building on them, just as they

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earlier developed their rifleman skills through experience. Eventually, if enough time remained on his enlistment or he chose to reenlist, the soldier would return to his rifle platoon, probably in a leadership role.

As the soldiers develop into all-around infantrymen, records should reflect their abilities. Our rifleman's success in the unit mortar school should be noted in the unit's files, but also in the soldier's personal job book and in his records at the Army personnel center (which would be maintained, one hopes, by the regimental adjutant). Over a 30-year career in the 41st Infantry this would become a full record indeed; our rifleman would likely have served in rifle, mortar, and antitank platoons and might also have been a communicator and staff NCO, on his way to first sergeant and command sergeant major.

Many of us can recognize the current British Army system in this proposal. We recognize as well that the MOS system as we now have it is irrelevant to a unit-based, cohesion-building training process. On the road to becoming a consummate infantryman, our 41st Infantry rifleman will not have been restricted to one group of task-based or weapons system-based duties. Instead he would have moved laterally in the infantry skill family, learning new jobs as required by his unit. In terms of today's MOS system, he would have served in four or five MOS. In terms of a cohesion-building system, he would have served a career in the 41st Infantry. His specialty would have been, simply, infantry.

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During the course of our rifleman's full career, the 41st might have to change in unforeseen ways. New fighting vehicles will someday replace the Bradley. New threats or new directions in national strategy might require the 41st to put aside its vehicles altogether and become light infantry, at least temporarily. The 41st might, as a unit, undergo mountain or jungle or counterinsurgency training. Through it all, our rifleman would develop new skills and his development would be recorded. No change in mission or equipment would separate him from the 41st on the grounds that his prior skills were no longer germane. His MOS would never be deleted from his unit's organizational scheme, nor would he become excess to the 41st and "short" elsewhere on the basis of MOS, because he would not have an MOS in the current sense.

Thus the simplification of the Army's MOS system is a necessary corollary to a unit-based training system. MOS should be grouped into branch-related clusters and the number of distinct MOS should be greatly reduced. Each combat arm should comprise a single broad MOS, and soldiers should acquire the skills their units need in the manner of our 41st Infantry rifleman. By changing the MOS system, we would liberate soldiers from the "union rules" drudgery of repetitive assignments in the same narrow set of skills. We would also terminate the MOS mismatch problem, and consequently remove MOS as a reason for reassignment and a cause of personnel turbulence. Most important, we would enhance the permanence of units; we would enable soldiers to have

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full and challenging careers in one unit. We would create conditions in which cohesion would thrive.

**W**e have examined changes in the personnel system which would be imposed from above and which would affect the entire force. We have considered the Army-wide changes in personnel policy without which cohesion cannot flourish fully, no matter what commanders do on their own. By definition, the centralized personnel system can only be altered at the center, at the Army's headquarters. But the unit is both the source of cohesion and our reason for seeking to enhance cohesion, and a whole range of initiatives can be undertaken now at unit level that will pay significant benefits for unit cohesion by themselves, and profound benefits if they accompany the Army-wide policy changes already recommended. Commanders can take some of these pro-cohesion initiatives now, without waiting for headquarters decisions. Other initiatives will require a nudge from the top, a statement of general direction, from the Army's leadership. Whatever the source, these initiatives would affect daily unit life, the seed bed of cohesion. They would increase the unit's importance in the mind of the soldier and they would make the Army more unit-centered.

To foster a cohesive unit environment, the "power down" philosophy of leadership must become the rule and not merely a slogan. Soldiers should look to their immediate leaders—NCOs and company-grade officers—for the important decisions

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that affect the soldiers' personal lives.<sup>9</sup> Pay problems, leave requests, promotion, transfer, punishment for minor offenses, all belong at the lowest level. The Army has moved authority downward in recent years, but more can be done. On leave and transfer requests, the immediate NCO leader should be the final authority and not merely a source of recommendation to the company commander. If a unit-centered system is adopted, the soldiers and their NCO leader will have known each other since basic training, and the NCO's natural authority will be correspondingly stronger. In a cohesive system there would be far fewer transfers altogether, but when the subject does arise for more senior soldiers, they should make their wishes known to and get the final decision from their commanders, not from the personnel center in Washington. Promotions to sergeant first class (E-7) and first sergeant (E-8) should be decentralized to battalion level, although promotion criteria and scheduling should continue to be centralized. As Colonel Darryl Henderson urged in his book *Cohesion*, NCO leaders should be empowered to grant or withhold passes without which a soldier cannot leave the post.<sup>10</sup>

In the interest of truly bringing the "power down," senior commanders should also control their natural desire to involve themselves deeply in matters of discipline. This last suggestion requires some explanation. When the commanders of installations or large formations (corps, divisions, or brigades) arrogate to themselves the decision on punishment for a particular class of offenses, or when they influence subordinate commanders to apply a standard or

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minimum punishment, they are following the example set by the Army's top leadership. Drug abuse is a case in point. Army regulations clearly state administrative discharge criteria for repeat drug offenders.<sup>11</sup> These criteria are applied throughout the Army as the standard response to drug abuse. Similarly, many senior commanders who are particularly concerned about a certain type of offense (such as driving under the influence of alcohol) personally involve themselves in one of two ways: either they announce that apart from court martial they retain exclusively the right to determine punishment in these cases, or they make clear to the next lowest level of commanders what the expected punishment should be. Taking the cue from their boss, subordinates use the same technique to force compliance with their own pet policies. For example, the brigade sergeant major has each soldier who is charged with wearing an improper uniform off post report to him, accompanied by the soldier's first sergeant; or the installation chief of staff has every soldier who is seriously in arrears to a local merchant report to him, accompanied by the soldier's company commander.

This overinvolvement of senior leaders in unit-level disciplinary matters weakens the authority of junior leaders. Instead of deciding the cases of their own soldiers guided by close knowledge of the soldier and the unit, the junior leader is reduced to either applying a standard punishment or pleading the unit's case to a commander far above him who has the final say. The soldier reports to an alien, sometimes distant office to be punished or browbeaten, or he receives a standard punishment from

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his own powerless leader. The message to soldiers is clear: look beyond your personal leaders for the big decisions about your future. Because soldiers are asked to follow their company-level leaders into battle, and not the installation commander or brigade sergeant major, this a dangerous message.

Another aspect of unit life that could better support cohesion is the sponsorship program that exists in one form or another in almost every unit. Under this program, new soldiers are introduced to their new unit environment by a peer who has been in the unit for a while. The point is to give the new soldier a friend who can ease him into unit life. Elevating the process into a more vigorous, more structured sponsorship program would pay greater dividends for cohesion. It worked for the 18th century Prussian army of Frederick the Great.<sup>12</sup> While weapons and tactics have changed in 200 years, human nature is much the same.

In a strong sponsorship like that in the 18th century Prussian army, the sponsor would be a veteran soldier, at least a specialist four or corporal, who had spent a minimum of one year in the unit. This veteran's sponsorship duties would encompass more than showing the new soldier where the snackbar is; he would also be responsible to the squad leader for teaching the new soldier the job skills not taught in basic training, his sponsorship would last six months, and his performance as a sponsor would be evaluated and become part of his record in the unit. Such a structured program would have several advantages. It would develop the technical, leadership, and teaching skills of the sponsor. It would more completely

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integrate the new soldier into his new home and way of life. Most important, it would bridge the yawning gap between unit life and the soldiers' social lives—a gap that does not exist in cohesive units.

The cohesion-building role of sports in unit life is so well known as to scarcely need repeating. But sports competition, like matters of discipline, has a way of attracting the involvement of senior leaders and thus drifting away from the unit level at which cohesion forms. Because of either senior officer egos, a misperception of the level most important for cohesion, or a desire to score public relations points, the meager resources allocated for soldier athletics are easily diverted to support "big time" semi-professional sports programs. These programs are ant cohesive because most soldiers ignore them, because they symbolize competition at levels (division, installation, and even Service) that are not important to most soldiers, and because these programs require the semipermanent absences of the athletes from their units and from their military duties. It matters hardly at all to most soldiers at Fort Bragg that the Fort Bragg Dragons football team defeated a local junior college team. Few soldiers anywhere care that Lieutenant Doe is the all-Service archery champion. But back in the 1st Battalion, 41st Infantry, the soldiers of B Company care a great deal that B Company beat C Company in flag football. Many B Company soldiers played on the team. Also, the sports competition between the companies mirrors and complements their operational relationship. Unit-level sports competition is thus another tool to weld unit life and social life. But vigilance like that of the late

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Lieutenant General Arthur S. Collins, Jr. (nemesis of "big-time" sports and sponsor of unit-level competition while Deputy Commander in Europe in the early 1970s) is required if the money allocated to sports is to serve the growth of cohesion.

Even vacation or leave, the time soldiers spend away from their units and their duties, can affect cohesion. Current practice, under which soldiers (not to exceed a certain percent of the unit) take leave individually throughout the year, has a big advantage; the unit is able to function and is ready for war throughout the year.<sup>13</sup> But in terms of cohesion there are minuses. The individual soldier on leave misses two weeks or a month of the unit's life. He might have missed some important moments. Also, his buddies who took up his slack missed *him*—not only in terms of work but maybe for his personality as well. And the unit operated at less than optimum efficiency during his absence. In fact, because individual leaves occur throughout the year, the unit will never attain optimum capability. A more efficient and more cohesion-enhancing policy would be block leave. Units would cease operating for one month, providing the sole opportunity that year for the unit's members to take ordinary leave. Neighboring units would assume the missions of the unit on leave. Block leaves would have to be staggered over the years so that opportunities for leaves during prime vacation periods would be shared. Under a block leave system, leave would become an extension of the unit's shared experience. Some soldiers would travel together at least part way to their leave destination, and a few might

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even spend the leave together. Another step would be taken toward combining unit life and social life.

Unit life feels the effects of the budget austerity of the late 1980s. From the cohesion perspective, one of those effects, the limitation of PCS (permanent change of station) moves and the consequent longer tours for soldiers, is highly desirable. This lessening of turbulence results from a rare but happy coincidence of cohesion with expediency. We should be grateful for this coincidence which forces the Service to do what is good for units. But because our underlying traits and systems have not yet changed, we should plan for a return to "normal," meaning the frequent moves and consequent instability of the individual-centered personnel system. One way to stabilize unit life in the midst of frequent personnel moves is to retain a few soldiers in certain positions longer, to have these few soldiers act as the unit's stabilizers, the unit's memory. The Army's experience in Korea shows the value of such stabilizers.

Korea is a "short tour" area, meaning that most US soldiers serve there for only a year. Soldiers arrive and depart individually and the effects of 100 percent turnover are felt throughout the year. Up to one-fifth of the soldiers in the US units are KATUSAs (Korean Army soldiers seconded to US units); these are men providing a stability and continuity that would otherwise be lacking. They serve in the same US unit for two to three years. Although they usually occupy low-level positions (in an armor unit they rarely rise higher than gunner, an E-5 job), they are nonetheless

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a unit memory which the newly arrived American commander can consult. Their presence provides continuity to unit life.<sup>14</sup>

Unless or until we convert to a unit-centered system, we need similar stabilizers in US units everywhere. Who should they be? Colonel Mike Malone has recommended that the two or three warrant officers in the combat arms battalion (maintenance officer, property book officer, and physician's assistant) would be good candidates: the current career imperative does not require these specialists to move as often as commissioned officers.<sup>15</sup> Other stabilizers could be the chaplain, the command sergeant major, the company first sergeant, and the personnel NCO. The point is to choose the jobs that will be stabilized, whatever they may be, and then lengthen the tours of the soldiers in those jobs throughout the Army.

Another source of stability that can be tapped without awaiting major personnel system changes is an active unit's relationship with its reserve component (RC), National Guard or Reserve, counterpart. The reserve components are by far the most stable elements of the Total Force because of their geographic basis. Therefore the reservist or guardsman who spends most of his career in one unit is the rule, not the exception. Active component (AC) units can draw on RC stability to build some of their own. The key is to make AC/RC unit relationships as permanent as changes in mission, doctrine, and organization will allow. If the same AC unit trains repeatedly with the same RC unit during the latter's annual training, if soldiers from the AC unit participate in

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the same RC unit's drills, then the RC unit will become the unit life memory, the oral historians of their active counterparts. This function ought not to be tasked, or even mentioned. But it will happen. Quite spontaneously, veteran sergeants of the Guard and Reserve will tell their active counterparts about incidents from annual training periods of a decade earlier, and a new vein of unit lore will have been uncovered. Both units will be the richer for it—quite apart from the potential combat payoff of habitual peacetime relationships between two units that will fight side by side.

There is more in AC/RC relationships that can build cohesion. In the ideal connection between two such units, the active unit should be a major recruiting source for the Reserve counterpart. In war or crisis, conversely, the active unit should look to the Individual Ready Reserve for replacements who have already "bonded" with the active unit. The relationships could work if the RC counterpart unit had the first rights at recruiting soldiers of the AC unit who were not reenlisting. Special incentives exclusively for counterpart units would "sweeten the pot" and, combined with the close unit-to-unit relationship and the ability of senior Reserve leaders to find civilian jobs for their soldiers, would sway departing active component soldiers to continue their military careers as counterpart unit reservists. But many departing AC soldiers would not make the geographical commitment needed to join the counterpart RC unit, or would choose not to join any RC unit. How could these soldiers maintain an association with their old

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units? The answer is through the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR).

After active duty, all soldiers are required to serve the balance of their eight-year enlistment obligation in the IRR. Their duties in the IRR are minimal: report their current addresses and perhaps attend an annual muster. If offered a continuing association with their former AC unit as individual reservists, including a two-week AT (annual training) period each year with the old outfit, more soldiers might choose a more active Reserve role. Such soldiers would lead normal civilian lives, earn Reserve retirement points and make a career in the Reserve, but would maintain a continuing association with their original AC units. In time of war, they would be ideal replacements or fillers for their units.

The reserve components have available an opportunity to build cohesion that is denied to active units. Because RC soldiers lead two simultaneous lives, one as civilian employees and the other as soldiers, RC units can draw on the cohesion that is developed in their soldiers' civilian organizations. If many of the workers in an Ohio National Guard artillery battery were also employees of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, for example, the cohesion generated on the job would extend to unit life, and *vice versa*. Such relationships are not a new idea.

When Kitchener in 1915 expanded Britain's small and cohesive pre-war army into the mass army that fought World War I, he explicitly drew on the cohesion of civilian businesses. The "Pals Battalions" of that time were so called because they were recruited

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from the employees of one company, men who already knew each other well because they worked together daily. Corporate rivalries played a role, too, as when the Liverpool clerks of the White Star Steamship Company joined *en masse* to form one platoon and the clerks of arch-rival Cunard immediately formed another.<sup>16</sup> There are a few corporate connections in US reserve components today. For example, a brigade of the 70th Division (Training) located in Detroit draws many of its members from Chrysler Corporation. A Stillwater, Oklahoma, battalion of the 95th Division (Training) is staffed largely by students, faculty, and employees of Oklahoma State University. These units demonstrate exceptional cohesion, as they should; their soldiers have twice the opportunity of soldiers in other units to know each other well.

We should take greater advantage of corporate cohesion by consciously linking corporations and institutions with RC units. The first step is to recruit businesses just as we recruit individuals. There would be disadvantages for the business, which would lose a group of key employees for two weeks during AT and for sudden, indefinite absences during crisis. But the closer employee relationships that would be generated, the improved job skills and physical fitness of employees, and the community relations benefits should combine to outweigh the disadvantages and make the Reserve unit relationship desirable for businesses. For the Army, the benefits are even greater. Imagine the quality of an IBM signal battalion, a Cummins Engine Company maintenance

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battalion, a Caterpillar Tractor artillery battery. Universities, with their young populations, ROTC programs, and more flexible schedules are also ideal candidates for relationships with RC units.

With corporate and university connections established with RC units, the cohesion benefits would start to spill over to active units. Habitual AC/RC unit relationships would take on a GM or US Steel flavor over the years, with benefits that now can only be dimly foreseen. An executive's daughter might be influenced by her father's unit association to choose Army ROTC. A retiring sergeant major might land a good job with the company "sponsoring" the RC counterpart unit. The precise payoffs are unknown, but the overall effect would be to bring the American people and their Army closer together.

**I**n this chapter we have examined ideas that would increase the cohesion and thus the fighting power of Army units. We have considered a fundamental change of direction for the personnel system, one that replaces the individual-centered system with one based on the unit. We have seen that less sweeping changes directed at unit life can also contribute to cohesion. The combination of both levels of change—system reversal as well as practical, low-cost change at unit level—could give US forces an edge in fighting power in any next war. But if we are to follow through, if we are to commit the Army wholeheartedly on a unit-centered course, a conversion of the spirit must accompany the specific changes. How to accomplish that daunting task is our next subject.

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## 6. CONVERSION OF THE SPIRIT

**M**oving to a unit-centered, pro-cohesion personnel system is more than a matter of mechanical changes to the way we do business. If that was all there was to it, we would likely have made the switch long ago. The fact that we have not changed, despite generations of weak and sometimes unsatisfactory results from the personnel system, convinces me that widely held beliefs support the present system and frustrate change. These beliefs are among the core assumptions of American life. They are (*not* in order of importance) the mass production theory of organization, the urge to centralize, the passion for efficiency, and the primacy of the individual.

Our devotion to these beliefs is not immutable. Experience can cause the culture to alter or discard them, although the process requires several generations. Fortunately for the unit-centered personnel system, the first of these core beliefs has already passed out of fashion. The Henry Ford vision of industrial organization developed in the second decade of the century reached its apogee in the inter-war period; it was greatly honored in the 1950s and 1960s

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but is now in the latter stages of decline. Even in the "sunset" industries that hew to precise job definition, detailed work rules, and the implied limitation of worker responsibility that accompanies them, change is in the wind. Railroads, auto factories, even steel mills are trying to shed the assembly line straight jacket through a combination of automation and broader work rules that give workers a greater challenge and managers greater authority. In the "sunrise" high-tech firms and service industries, broad worker involvement and accompanying responsibility are the norm. The image of passive workers repeating the same monotonous task without interest in or responsibility for the total process is not the image of Silicon Valley or Route 128. So in discarding precise classification of tasks and skills, the Army would be following a clear, dominant trend in American life—riding the growing legitimacy of a new core belief. Conversely, to maintain the present Army MOS system is to invite association with the least fashionable and least profitable sector of the economy. For an institution whose motto is "Be all you can be," the course is clear.

**T**he Army's course is less clear regarding the other core beliefs. Like the mass production way of organizing, these beliefs grew up over generations, and they will only decline under the weight of prolonged contrary experience. The process could take centuries, or not happen at all. Furthermore, regardless of whatever the short-term gains may be, it is not the role of the military to try to change the

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nation's values. Rather, the military accepts the nation's values and works within the limits permitted by those values to accomplish its mission.

Is the Army therefore required by the nation's core beliefs to accept an individual personnel system and make the best of it? I think not. Accepting, defending, and promoting the nation's values do not prevent the Army from suspending, even contradicting them internally, provided that our leaders make plain the need to do so. We already do this in the matter of soldiers' constitutional rights.

Military discipline requires that soldiers give up some of the rights enjoyed by other citizens. Commanders explain the need for this waiver to all new soldiers (and occasionally to the soldiers' parents, lawyers, or Congressmen), and the great majority accept it. The same regular, straightforward explanation by the leadership must accompany any Army attempt to operate against the grain of other core beliefs. Soldiers and society must understand that while the Army supports and defends a particular value, the Army must modify or contradict the same value in its own personnel system. The Army's explanatory task is complicated by the differing levels of acceptance of each core belief by the American public.

The public's devotion to efficiency, especially efficiency in government operations, is deep and abiding. Efficiency is measured in simple cost-benefit ratio, with both cost and benefit expressed in dollars. In these terms comparison is easy across government departments and, indeed, across the whole economy. The failure to achieve higher or at least average

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efficiency must mean bad management or waste, both strongly negative values. The military has always struggled to make its case in this simple "resources in/product out" environment. Quantifying the product or benefit provided by the armed forces is impossible, and comparing the efficiency of the Defense Department with, say, the Postal Service is nearly so. Nevertheless the Defense bureaucracy hotly pursues the popular but inexpressible goal of greater efficiency. Systems, reports, and inspections ferret out "inefficiencies" across the department, and defense managers strive to find meaningful descriptions of how much defense or how much readiness a set amount of dollars will buy. Habituated by generations of bureaucratic battle in this accountants' paradise, the armed services now automatically pursue the goal of peacetime efficiency.

But devotees of peacetime efficiency would recoil at the inefficiencies that a unit-centered personnel system would create. Worse, these inefficiencies would be numerically, some financially, measurable. The efficiency experts would pounce on them. So if the Army chooses to flout the efficiency principles in the way it manages personnel, it should prepare its ground well.

The most noticeable inefficiency stemming from a unit-centered system will be redundancy. Without central control over individual assignments some units will fairly quickly become overstrength. Others will suffer shortages. Eventually, limits on accessions, or sending new soldiers to units, will bring

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about a rough balance. But small excesses and shortages will always remain to torment the efficiency experts. The net imbalance will not be much worse than that which we now enjoy under a centralized, individual-centered system. But it will seem worse to the efficiency experts for two reasons: because shortages and redundancy will strike without regard to a unit's priority and because the system will lack the tools to fix the imbalance. Perhaps a third reason will particularly offend the devotees of efficiency: that is, because the Army will have accepted, even volunteered for greater imbalance by choosing a unit-centered system.

Other inefficiencies will also leap to the attention of analysts. As part of unit moves, units will eventually have to be retrained and thus be unready for combat for a time. In current US rotation, units with like equipment and mission can exchange missions and rotate with minimum retraining. But the world will change, and with it US overseas stationing and unit missions. It is not so far-fetched to imagine US infantry battalions rotating from a mechanized infantry configuration and conventional mission in Germany to a light infantry configuration and counterinsurgency mission in Central America. The battalion will be cohesive, but it will require retraining, as will the battalion that replaces it in Germany. The retraining will pull the unit "out of the line" for a while, and will also cost money. The efficiency experts will howl. The transition to unit attendance at Service schools will not please them, either; until the system is working smoothly the schools will train fewer students per year, and will thus be less

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efficient. Also, the change from the present movement system (most moves are individual, with only a few unit moves) to a system dominated by unit moves means much more work for support staffs and higher headquarters. It is but a short step from "more work" to "inefficient," and in fact the meticulous planning required for a successful unit move has no parallel in the individual replacement system.

Of course, a unit-centered system will create some compensating efficiencies: savings in initial entry training time and costs, reduced capacity needed in Service schools due to the growth of exportables, fewer moves, and higher reenlistment for both active and reserve component units. But no amount of compensating efficiency will satisfy efficiency experts; their goal of ever-increasing efficiency is unattainable. So if the Army is to move to a unit-centered system it must plan how to disarm the efficiency experts, how to decouple its personnel system from society's core belief in efficiency.

**T**here is enormous difference between peacetime and wartime efficiency. Edward N. Luttwak argues that the two qualities are virtual opposites, and that the nation that keeps wartime efficiency uppermost in its peacetime planning and training is likeliest to prevail in war. The Army should seize on this distinction and make the war/peace contrast plain to Defense managers and legislators. The Service should convince its civilian superiors to accept limited peacetime inefficiencies in exchange for the far more important wartime efficiencies that a unit-

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centered system would produce. When the costs of failure to deter or win war are considered, this would seem a fair exchange. The British Army has had a similar unwritten understanding with its political masters and with the British public for generations; politicians who demand strict accounting from other government departments accept the eccentricities of the British regimental system and the British Army's hunger for military bands with hardly a murmur. In this country, the Marines are generally forgiven their peacetime foibles (the rigor of Marine boot camp, for example, or Marine haircuts) because of the wartime performance promised by their reputation. The Army's case for a unit-centered personnel system will have to be on the same basis. Our argument would be—permit us to depart from accepted standards of efficiency so we can create cohesion in our units that will build a much stronger wartime force. Properly made, the argument would convince, and the limitations of peacetime efficiency could be safely set aside.

The second core belief which stands in the way of a unit-centered personnel system is centralization, our urge to centrally control vast undertakings. The strong leader or manager is by definition in control of events in his enterprise; whether he achieves control through persuasion, suggestion, or edict is a less important matter of style. The latter method fits well with the high value the military places on obedience and on rapid response to orders. The military's natural tendency toward central control is strengthened by the way the US Government corrects perceived faults and executes its budget.

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Congress and the press scrutinize government operations, including the Army's. Once they note a problem, a quick solution is required. Quick solutions, especially those that truly address the problem, require central control and obedient executors. When Congress notes a major shortcoming, prudent military chiefs do not opt for further study or eventual self-corrections; they issue an edict. The budget process confirms the military in this centralism.

New budgets can bring unanticipated changes of direction, and in the US one-year budget system, the changes can be so rapid that only central control can cope with them. Similarly, budget execution—spending precisely the right amount of money on the right activity within the right time frame—demands control from the top. Even if budget planning and execution is decentralized, changes during the year (e.g., delay in obtaining continuing resolution authority, or a reprogramming action as national priority suddenly shifts) cannot be managed without strong central control.

So the removal of central control from the management principles that guide the military is unthinkable. Even in personnel matters, in which we know that too much reliance on central control hinders cohesion, the habit of centralization will be hard to break. Central control gives the Army's leaders the power to make the changes required by the budget process, by shifts in priority, and by the efficiency ethic. The power would be sorely missed.

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**W**e would miss our power to weight the force in accordance with priorities (e.g., more NCOs in Europe or fewer at Fort Hood). In the absence of priorities, we would miss our power to "balance" the force, to make units of equal priority equal in strength by issuing movement orders to individuals. We would also miss the control which the MOS system provides over the number and rank of the soldiers performing each job in the Service. These extensions of central power are key to the individual-centered personnel system. We are so habituated to them that only the strongest leadership will be able to pry us free.

Central control has other attractions in personnel management. Central power enables political leaders to use the armed services for social engineering. Racial integration is a good example of a social change that affected the entire society and which began in a centrally imposed military personnel policy. The US military's unique dependence on women may have similarly far-reaching social effects. The 1960s attempt to raise life's possibilities for the educationally disadvantaged by bringing them into the Army (and thus, it was hoped, eventually into the category of veteran) is a less successful example of social engineering. It is unrealistic to expect that social engineering in the Services will not continue. As long as the armed forces are large enough to affect society, and as long as military service is honored by public rewards, political leaders will occasionally use the Services for this purpose. Social engineering may benefit society, but if it so damages cohesion that our forces lose their battles, then the game will not have been

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worth the candle. Regardless of the impact of a particular social initiative, one point is clear: effective social engineering would be much harder without central control in the personnel system.

Central control has another tempting quality. It enables the Army's top leadership or well-placed managers in the personnel hierarchy to tinker with the system, to make the marginal changes which will make the system just that much better. The temptation to tinker is strong. There are many relatively senior officers in staff positions; reputations are made by recommending improvement and not by endorsing the *status quo*, and the personnel system has seemed dynamic for so long that to recommend stasis would test the credulity of one's superiors. So incremental changes are announced on a monthly basis as the personnel system is fine-tuned from the top. Of course, this eternal tinkering has purposes: to carry out decisions about the priorities of forces, to balance the force, to adjust to success or failure in recruiting or reenlistment, and to gain marginal efficiencies. The tinkering would become almost prohibitively difficult without the tools provided by central control.

Central control is a deeply entrenched core belief as well as a comfortable administrative habit. Overturning this core belief is not a prerequisite for a unit-based system (and overturning it is at any rate impossible; the military is unthinkable without central control). Central control must, however, be satisfied to make decisions about units, while units take the decisions concerned with individuals. Such a revision might offend those who now exercise central

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control, but it would be consonant with a dominant current leadership principle, that authority should be delegated to the lowest level that can exercise it. Just as the autocratic over-centralizing commander is viewed with disfavor as being out of step with the Army's principles and with the qualities of his soldiers, so the central power of the personnel system limits and stultifies units, depriving them of decisions about their own soldiers. The leader who would make this point would also stress that while personnel operations would decentralize, other parts of the Army would remain under central control.

**A**nother core belief, the primacy of the individual, is more potent than even our dedication to efficiency or our preference for central control. The personnel system's preference for the individual is far more than a convenient habit; rather, it derives from the nation's founding principles. The nation's dedication to equality and to individualism is as strong as ever—some would say stronger. So when one of the armed services whose role is to defend these values announces an intention to dispense with one of them in the Service's internal workings, controversy will likely follow.

Proponents of the new personnel system will have to make plain how a unit-centered Army can better defend the nation's core values. They could add other points, too. A unit-centered system would make no change in the constitutional rights enjoyed by soldiers. Their legal relationships with their commanders and fellow soldiers would be unaltered.

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Soldiers would continue to be able to communicate with senior leaders, with the Army's headquarters, or with their Congressmen. Soldiers would still have opportunities to volunteer for transfer to another unit, post, or MOS. The opportunities would, however, be fewer; soldiers would be able to transfer only at reenlistment (except for hardship cases, which of course would always be heard), and in a unit-centered force there would be fewer extra-regimental positions for which to volunteer. Concerning transfers, there is an important corollary: the Army must make it normal, even preferable, for NCOs, warrant officers, and most officers to make a career in one unit. Unless soldiers have confidence that the unit-based system is permanent and does provide the best opportunity for promotion and challenge as well as for conviviality, soldiers will "vote with their feet" at reenlistment time. The movement of soldiers and families will frustrate cohesion and eat up money, just as under the individual-centered system. The attempt would have failed.

**A** unit-centered system challenges soldiers to master more skills, to adapt to the lateral job changes within the unit that would take the place of the current system's MOS-driven moves from station to station. The soldier will have to know more as he masters duties in, say, both the antitank and rifle platoons, and before long he will have to teach more. His studying and teaching will not for the most part be at Service schools or training centers, either, but in the battalion, often in the evening and

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on weekends. In terms of skill mastery, the unit-centered system asks more of soldiers of all ranks.

The soldier will also have to accept the promotion vagaries that would accompany decentralization. These will counterbalance the inequities imposed on current promotions in the name of MOS imbalance (e.g., slower promotion for equally capable soldiers in one MOS than for another), but individual cases will pinch nonetheless. A staff sergeant in one battalion will move into a fortuitous platoon sergeant vacancy and his less lucky peers will take note.

Soldiers will also have to sacrifice more of their personal lives for the unit's sake than simply the time spent mastering additional skills. Under a unit-centered system that emphasized unit temporary duty (TDY) moves as the best way to accomplish overseas missions, separation from family would be more common. Army units would increasingly take on the separation rhythm of their Navy and Marine counterparts. Of course, a unit-centered personnel system can function without unit TDY. The resistance to converting the force to more frequent family separations would be so great that the Army's leadership may well reject this option. But the alternative of unit moves overseas together with families is both so complex and so expensive that the unit TDY method should be carefully weighed. If cohesion develops as it should during the TDY among the unit members overseas as well as among families left behind (as has happened in the Army's light infantry battalions assigned to peacekeeping duties in the Sinai Peninsula), the negative impact of family separation will be

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partly compensated by the unity and closeness that will develop. There is no excuse for "practicing to be miserable," but when a mission requires sacrifice, strong cohesion can come out of sharing that sacrifice as a unit.

A unit-centered system demands much from soldiers, but no more than they are capable of giving. The smartest, best educated, least AWOL Army in American history is also the best equipped to master a broader range of skills. Those who have served with our soldiers recently will agree that the troops take great pride in their units, glory in the hard parts of their service, and are disappointed only when a particular challenge is not tough enough. If we ever had soldiers who could make a success out of a unit-centered system, we have them now. The problem will be to maintain the standard of quality we now enjoy. At present, the standard is unchallenged. The nation, Congress, and Department of Defense executives are pleased with the success of the Services' recruiting and pleased at the Army's ability to attract high-quality recruits. Recruiting incentives and budgets seem reasonably assured. But as yet unforeseen circumstances—greater budget austerity, a boom in American manufacturing, public disenchantment with the Services over some foreign initiative involving US troops—will someday press the Services, and especially the dangerous and manpower-intensive Army, to lower enlistment standards. For many reasons, the Services must resist this pressure; the need to maintain and enhance cohesion by means of a unit-centered system is one of them.

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In fighting to keep high the quality of soldiers, the Army will be fully in consonance with yet another core belief: the dedication to excellence that has swept the country in response to the economic reversals of the past decade. "Excellence" or "quality" are the catch words of every manufacturer's advertising these days, and books on how to build excellent business organizations top the best-seller list. The Army has explicitly built this core belief into its internal communications; "Army of Excellence" is a phrase soldiers hear often. To defend its level of personnel quality and to resist any attempts to lower it, the Army should move this theme over into its external communications. In recruiting ads, in public service announcements, and in the other ways that it meets the public, the Army should stress the brains, fitness, and educational attainments of all soldiers. The popular and now completely anachronistic notions that some soldiers, especially combat arms soldiers, need not be smart, or that soldiers are the people who could not find another job or were too dumb to evade the draft—these should be put to rest. The Army must use examples from the top-quality troops it now has to convince Congress and the public that there can be no turning back on quality.

**T**here are also specific initiatives the Army can take to further enhance quality with cohesion in mind. A good start would be to recruit more soldiers who already intend a full Army career. There are youngsters in high school who want to be sergeants major, just as there are applicants to West

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Point who aspire to be generals. There would be more if Army publicity and advertising laid more stress on a Service career and less on incentives like the College Fund or training for an equivalent civilian skill that pull a soldier away from the Service after his first enlistment. How often do high school audiences hear about the responsibilities of being a company first sergeant? How much do high school guidance counselors know about the pay, benefits, and training afforded a soldier over a full career? Along with information about careers, the Army could add incentives to arrange longer initial enlistments. Such modest initiatives would not transform the first-term soldier population, nor should they. Today's high quality is directly related to quick-return Service incentives like money for college and short enlistments. But whatever we can do to increase the careerist proportion of the new soldiers will add to the cohesion of the units in which they serve.

Another trend in society which the Army has not fully tapped is the growing "warrior ethic." This trend exhibits itself not only in the "Rambo" genre of films, but also in the general attitude that the qualities of the good warrior—weapons skills, valor, and honorable intentions—are desirable and relevant to modern life. The warrior ethic has always run stronger in America than the media or pollsters have recognized. Now, after successful US military operations in Grenada and over Libya, it is in full flood, and the Services should take advantage of it to build cohesion and enhance soldier quality. Army publicity should emphasize the combat arms, the most physically challenging combat training, and the most


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spectacular weapons. Clerical and support activities should be downplayed or directed at narrow target audiences. Putting the spotlight on the combat skills would pay several benefits; the incipient warriors in the population would be attracted to the profession that ideally suits them, and the warriors who comprise the combat units would be encouraged, their group pride, or *esprit de corps*, complementing their cohesion.

Fanning the flame of the warrior ethic is one way of placing the combat units on a pedestal, of drawing a distinction between the soldiers who are likely to face the enemy in battle and those who are not, and building the pride of the combatants. Other ways could include higher pay for combat arms soldiers (a variation on the current enlistment and reenlistment bonuses, which are intended to fill shortages rather than build the prestige of combat functions) or, alternatively, higher test scores as enlistment standards for the maneuver combat arms than all other branches of the Service. Relatively higher entrance standards would be consonant with the enlistment bonuses now paid combat soldiers and would further set these soldiers apart from those who volunteer for support functions. Higher entrance standards would enhance the prestige of combat units and ensure that the smartest soldiers in the force would be doing the job in which their brains would do themselves and their country the most good. Higher entrance standards would also increase the likelihood that the soldiers in the fighting units would be up to the training challenges posed by a unit-centered system.

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The recommendations I sketched fostering cohesion would also help the Army maintain, even enhance, the quality of its soldiers. But that quality is already at its highest level in history. The acceptability of military service to a large number of very talented young people shows that the Army is doing a great deal right, and that its job and style accord well with some national core values that are now in the ascendant: patriotism, warrior ethic, integrity, and excellence. So, convincing the nation and our own soldiers to permit the Army to set aside three other core values (efficiency, centralization, and primacy of the individual) should not be impossible—particularly when the benefits of a unit-centered system are portrayed.

nce the case for a unit-centered system is successfully made, the soldiers will run with it. The soldiers, NCOs, and junior officers are, in my opinion, ready to accept the challenge and sacrifice that a unit-centered system would entail. They have the brains and the dedication to master tasks beyond the scope of their MOS and skill levels and to make their units into tight, proud families. They would use the stability and unity offered by a unit-centered system to make stronger organizations and hence a stronger Army than any of us have yet known. They would add cohesion to the other categories in which American soldiers have historically held the advantage. May we have the vision and the daring to give them the chance.

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3. Ibid., p. 240.

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5. US, Department of the Army, *Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Forces*, by R. R. Palmer, B. J. Wiley, and W. R. Keast (Washington, DC: GPO, 1948), pp. 176-179, 202, 205, 208.

6. The replacements were trained in the United States by Army Ground Forces. Interestingly, however, embarkation points and the replacement depots overseas were run by the Army Services of Supply, the command also responsible for providing the inanimate resources of war. Palmer et al., p. 175.

7. The Army's official history states, "The experience of replacements en route tended to destroy their morale and to undo the effects of their training. Shipped without unit organization or strong command, they were passed mechanically from one agency to another—depot, port, transport, and a series of temporary stations in the theater—often spending months before they were assigned to duty with a unit. In this period, they became physically soft. their discipline slackened, and their rapidly acquired skills tended to fade out with disuse. What the frontline unit received was not what the replacement training center had produced." Palmer et al., p. 205.

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13. Lerwill, pp. 332-333.
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